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THE
SPITFIRE,

A NAUTICAL ROMANCE.

BY
CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF

"BEN BRACE," "JACK ADAMS," &c.

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE SPITFIRE.

CHAPTER I.

FOUR months had elapsed since the ball; not a tidings had been heard—no letter came to remove the doubts and despondency of Laura Mackenzie; and even Law's advice, as to her removal into Cornwall, had been unavailing. He had received no tidings of his client; but the secret cause in which he was retained, had, by his activity, become so certain, that had the mysterious stranger appeared, proceedings would instantly have been begun.

"I would have an answer, my dear Laura," said Lady de Lancy, as they sat alone in

solitary grandeur, "that I can understand. You see how my father's attentions increase, even as you seem more retiring; come, Laura, do make yourself my mamma, and I will be an obedient child."

"It sounds strangely in my ears, the request that I should marry your father, and you yourself are a mother; you might call me your child's grandmother; and that," said Laura, archly, "would make me look a young and interesting bride."

"Although, my dear Laura, that might sound strangely, as you say, divest it of all imagination, and the difference is really nothing very alarming. My father married when he was only twenty, and, at this moment, I am not yet that age; you are nineteen—so that all the immense difference is only twenty years."

"That is true," said Laura, musing; "but at any rate, you must admit, that in marrying him, I should marry a man old enough to be my father."

"And so does every woman," replied Mar-

garet, “ who marries any one sixteen years older than herself ; it certainly is a manner of making the picture disagreeable ; but look around you, and experience will convince you of this fact. If the woman is older than the man, the marriage is generally one of convenience on the part of the man, and never continues to run smoothly ; it is against nature, and our own minds convince us of it. If the parties are equal in age, the woman is never sufficiently disposed to give way to the opinions and wishes of the man ; and when both quarrel for a supremacy of government, the marriage must be unhappy, for it would be an eternal scene of quarrels, disputes, controverted opinions, and useless recriminations, if such is the case with a parity of years ; five years would scarcely give a due preponderance, and ten, hardly too much ; between ten and fifteen, there is but little to quarrel about, and having got as far as fifteen, an additional five years is not worth arguing about.”

“ Well done, indeed, Margaret ; you should have followed your father’s profession, you

would soon learn to make the worse the better cause, and to persuade your listeners that marrying a man who is a grandfather, to a girl of nineteen, is much more desirable than to marry her to one she loves, of twenty-four years of age. I admire the good feeling which leads you to support your father's pretensions, but you must excuse me, if I become a judge in my own case, examine the evidences of my own heart, and sum up differently from your expectations."

"I own I am warm in the cause, Laura; and perhaps my own personal convenience renders me more so. You see how we are situated—not a soul comes near this large and frowning castle, to me, a prison only enlivened by your society; of course, then, I am anxious to preserve the being, who makes my life comparatively comfortable. We should be one family—all friends."

"And yet," said Laura, "I doubt much the friendship which really exists between Sir Ronald and your father; one seems always speaking as if the other was afraid of him;

the frown of your husband is answered by the imperative look of your father; and occasionally the words are sharp and angry between them. Now, we could be the same friends, and live in this castle, if I were married to Albert."

Margaret started; but women, even with themselves, require much thought to evade a question or prompt a reply. "Albert and his brother have quarrelled—where is he? who can find him? what are all his useless vows of affection, when he disappears like a shadow, and is no longer seen? Months have elapsed and no letter has arrived for you; why, it is common charity to believe him dead, rather than forgetful of his vows."

Margaret knew her ground well; the very word, *dead*, changed all the current of her thoughts; and leaving the vulnerable part of Margaret's sentence without attack, she merely ejaculated "Dead!"

"Yes," continued Lady de Lancy, "dead. Has he ever failed to write to you before? If he commands a ship, and traffics with India,

although the voyage is long, and oftentimes perilous, yet has he ever found means of conveyance for his letters ; and even when busied in robbing some merchant of Montezuma's plume, even then from Mexico, a place almost unknown to us, excepting from fabulous history, which has paved the streets with gold, like a second El Dorado, even then, his letters came. If he lives, he has forgotten you ; if he is dead, the sooner he is forgotten the better."

" I know, Margaret, you say this without any intention of hurting my feelings, but you wound them most dreadfully, and wound me in a manner difficult, indeed, to be cured ; still, I can alleviate the pain I cannot entirely obliterate, by affirming my unaltered intention to be true to him, and never allow another to occupy his place, until I am certain that death has removed him beyond all doubt, all possibility of his return. I am not insensible to your father's kindness, but I could live here with Albert, and be happy ; but with your father for my husband, I must be miserable.

I will not hurt your feelings by a further allusion to my constancy, which neither fortune nor circumstances can change."

"Poor girl," said Margaret, with a show of pity, "poor girl! it is hard to live on, and each day to confirm your worst fears. Tell me, how much longer time will you give me to resume this conversation? If, at the end of a month from this day, no letter arrives, Law is ignorant, and that doting wizard, Herbert has not seen him, will you consent to be my father's wife?"

"I cannot answer that to you, which should be answered to him; before that time, we shall have intelligence of Albert; but if at its expiration there should come no tidings, then I will promise you to lend a more willing ear than at present to the communication."

"But," said Margaret, willing by detraction to do more than she could hope to do by argument, "the public papers might mention his execution; the deserters, in these times, are shot—or hung—"

“ But your husband would avert such a disgrace to his name ?”

“ My husband is a patriot, he knows no good but his country’s good ; examples prevent a repetition of offence, and the impartiality of the law, which would condemn the high as well as the lowly born, is the pride of our countrymen. It would be impolitic to interfere with a just administration of the law.”

“ It would be a crime to allow a brother to perish without an effort to save him.”

“ We should try of course my dear, to move Sir Ronald to apply to the government, but—”

“ But,” interrupted Laura, with great emotion, “ the certain death of the brother would be no very disagreeable news.”

“ Remember your promise of the month—”

“ My word is pledged, and that is sacred.”

This comfortable little fencing, with the peculiar sharpness of the thrusts and probes, did not inhanche the friendship of these ladies ; Laura was satisfied that either her prospects of wealth, her jewels, or some unknown cause

operated to make this marriage so desirable to Margaret; and yet Rawlinson lived in good style, was lavish of his presents, and was ever ready to dip his hand into his pocket. If Laura mentioned the wants of the poor, he never relaxed in his endeavours to alleviate the distress of the poor orphan, and his daughter never lost an opportunity of forwarding his views; yet there was no certainty of wealth, the uncle, although Laura agreed to every proposition of Mr. Law's, still continued to make further propositions, to require larger sums to be added to him, and Rawlinson invariably recommended Laura to acquiesce in all demands, however unjust. He seemed so generously disposed, that the match could not be for money; when once that point was established in her mind, love began to make a little advance, for there are few who are insensible to the undeviating kindness of a fellow creature; it must engender friendship, and friendship is the gravel walk to the shrubbery of love.

The time passed, the family evenings were

more sociable ; only one retained his austerity, only one seemed to have a heaviness of heart, which no time could chase away. Sir Ronald was ever silent, ever cheerless ; the wit of Rawlinson on his exquisite mimickry of the country folks although it convulsed the ladies, never drew the slightest smile from the face of Sir Ronald : he was ever lost in his own thoughts, ever disposed to silence and restraint ; he had been informed of Laura's answers to his wife's request ; the time stole on, and the day before the total elapse of the month arrived.

They had breakfasted, and merry were the looks of Rawlinson and his daughter at their victim. But Sir Ronald never appeared to notice them ; he had, on entering the room, taken her hand, and in a whisper, conveyed his wish, that she should come secretly to his library. She rather startled at his proposition, but resolved to obey the summons. She thought perhaps, that Sir Ronald was about to offer her some present, or to give that, which the privilege of age sanctions—the unwelcome article, advice. Laura was all kindness, all

compliance ; she was innocent of the world and its ways, and could not believe that people would commit a bad action, when they had apparently nothing to gain by so doing ; her mother had taught her, that honesty prospered, whilst sooner or later, dishonesty was discovered and disgraced. She therefore viewed all round her as her best and truest friends ; for no motive but friendship could be assigned for her long visit, excepting the growing affection of Rawlinson.

No sooner was that early meal finished, at which Rawlinson latterly had always been a guest, than Laura, with timid steps, entered the sanctum of Sir Ronald. She found the Baronet hard at his studies—the bible was the object ; he was endeavouring to trace whether the reformed church could lay claim to be the representative of the primitive church, and how far the Romanist, by having forced into their tenets, certain opinions, which they say are traditional, had separated itself from the church in the time of Ireneus,

Clement and Polycarp. It was a subject upon which Sir Ronald loved to dwell, for in the dissensions of the various churches, he was led to imagine, that the truth was not firm in either, and hence he shaped his course his own way and endeavoured to reconcile to himself the strange doctrines he believed. He carefully placed a mark in the book, and scratched the margin with his nail, as if to resume on another occasion the search which amused him.

“ Sit down, Miss Mackenzie,” he said ; “ I claim half an hour’s conversation with you, on a point of much importance. I am informed, that to-morrow you are to give my wife a promise, to receive the addresses of Mr. Rawlinson,—nay, hang not down your head, the most excellent, the most virtuous, the mildest, the meekest of your sex, need not blush to own a well placed attachment ; marriage is the object of your lives, it is the beacon, the light for which you anxiously watch, until you either reach the harbour in security, or are wrecked

on the hopeless rocks, which peep through the surface of the water, and on which to guard you from them, the beacon is placed. I venture to ask you a plain question, which you, as a sensible girl, under my roof and protection, may answer as fearlessly, as if you addressed your father. Are your affections placed upon Rawlinson, or upon my brother ?”

“ I answer the question, Sir Ronald, relying upon your promise of respect. I have no disguise ; I have told your wife that I loved your brother, and I love him still, although the pride of our sex might justly complain of his neglect. It is, I fear, a bad act, but I have allowed my pride to better my feelings ; it is a species of revenge upon him for his neglect, that has allowed me, for one moment, to encourage Mr. Rawlinson.”

“ The world,” said Sir Ronald, in his caustic manner, “ accuse your sex of the weakness of babbling, and add, that a secret known to one woman, is shortly confided to another, and enlarges its circles as a stone thrown into water ; nay, men have been found to declare

that a woman only keeps one secret, and that is the secret of her own dishonour ;—that you are prone to prattle, is certain ; but that you are deficient always in prudence, I doubt. On me depends your happiness, or your misery. Nay, start not, I shall not harm you ; if your skin was as fine as a butterfly's wing, not the slightest spot should be seen from my touch. Can *you*, you a woman, keep a secret, which concerns yourself ?”

Sir Ronald asked the question in his common, slow, impressive, manner, at the same time, looking as if he doubted the possibility of such a wonderful and almost unnatural effort.

“ Sir,” Laura replied, with all the dignity of an offended woman, “ if you disbelieve the power of our sex to keep a secret, why do you insult the sex by offering one ?”

“ Miracles have occurred,” said Sir Ronald, “ and in these latter days are believed ; let a miracle be wrought upon you ; keep the secret which I shall relate to you, carefully ; and, above all, do not whisper it : nay, not the

slightest intimation of it must be given, for upon you the bolt would fall, not upon me."

Laura's curiosity was excited, the allusion to some personal mischief lurked under the last expression, and her fears were in no way alleviated by regarding the cold, fixed, features of the Baronet, who seemed as immoveable as a statue. "I beg you, Sir Ronald, to continue; the adversities I have already suffered have purchased me some experience, and I think after your remark and caution I can venture, even without the miracle, to keep close here the secret with which you intrust me."

"It may seem rude, nay harsh—but I advise it; leave Raven Castle as soon after to-morrow as possible; if you love Albert, cherish that love; before long he will appear again. If you see him," he said with much earnestness, "tell him a repentant brother sues for his forgiveness, and join your endeavours to my words for that which has hitherto rendered me unhappy. To-morrow, give your answer boldly; say you love Albert, and that you cannot

reconcile yourself to the paltry excuse of female revenge; attribute his silence to its proper cause; not to neglect, but to miscarriage; the seas are treacherous, and the voracious wave bursts upon the reeling vessel and sinks her. It is possible your letters might be lost; wait and do not, for a moment's pique, allow a villain, a heartless villain, to clutch such innocence as that."

Laura startled; the brother had sued for forgiveness to an offended brother; and now rose up in all bitterness against the father of his wife;—she stood eagerly watching him, and never attempted to answer.

"You do wisely," he continued; "whenever a man is inclined to garrulity, listen and learn his mind; it is sufficient to answer, when the answer urges him to a reply. The word villain, I leave in your heart to ponder over; give him no licence to talk or to dally with you; be to him civil but firm; haughty when the insolence of his glance falls upon you, proud, and dignified when he addresses you. Give him no excuse for being by your side, but write this

day to Mr. Law and place yourself under his protection ; but of this letter say not one word ; ask him to come down and receive you instantly ; and mind that, for to-morrow, answer, another week is requisite. You must not crush that villain's hopes entirely, and moreover from to-morrow you must never leave this castle's gate, nay, not a furlong, until you leave it altogether. Before long, you will return to it, and I shall be happier in your return. I have done one good action ; let me beg of you to think of these words in the solitude of your own chamber." He led her to the door, bowed, and in an instant was alone.

When villains work, the eyes of some are ever on the alert ; Laura found Margaret in her room, and in spite of her summoning her best courage to her aid, she found herself trembling like a leaf.

" You have been long, Laura ; I should have been jealous of your beauty and its power, but that I know your goodness. Come, relate to me your secret conversation ?"

Laura hesitated, then turning suddenly round

she kissed her friend and said, "It related to nothing very particular."

"I know him better, Laura, he never has had any one in his study these two years, half so long as you have been there this day; you could not have gazed at each other in stupid silence all this time; Sir Ronald's eyes only fatigue themselves over books, and his tongue breaks its restraint only when my father or Blackburn are present. Come, Laura, begin, there can be no secret between my husband and yourself; no, that is impossible, and if the impossibility could be erased, so improper that I will not grow jealous by suspicion."

"I cannot answer you more than this, Sir Ronald implied that Albert lived, and would soon be here."

Lady de Lancy started from her seat, "Here!" she exclaimed "here! then let him come, for my resolve is taken;" she instantly left the room and Laura was pleased at the unusual solitude of her chamber. For some time she pondered over the advice, and she felt from Margaret's sudden manner that she had

betrayed that which it would have been more advantageous to have denied. She locked her door, fearing from the injunction not to leave the castle, that some danger was at hand, and yet, who from? Margaret was her only friend, and Rawlinson her professed admirer; but as her invitation to remain at Raven Castle had evidently ceased, she resolved to act up to every word she had heard, and she sat down and wrote to Mr. Law. She felt some fear, as she resolved to go that instant and put the letter in the post herself. She had to pass Lady de Lancy's chamber; there, not intentionally, she overheard some words between Rawlinson and his daughter; the former was just with some anger asserting: "I tell you it is impossible, we cannot do it before to-morrow, I am not ready, neither is Blackburn here; he has gone to his sick mother, and returns late to-night."

"A curse upon the weakness," said Margaret, "which needs the aid of another to secure a child." Laura passed on; her heart beat violently; she skimmed like a shadow through the

large and desolate apartments, and ran to the village ; she placed the letter in the box, and felt all the relief a general would experience, who, being nearly surrounded, finds means to send his order for the approach of a near ally.

Margaret met her on her return. " You must have been anxious about your letter, Laura ; why trouble yourself about that which is every day done by a servant. Now, may I ask to whom you wrote ? "

" To Mr. Law," replied Laura.

" You have ever consulted my father about that correspondence, why now desert his advice and trust to your own ; women's letters seldom are conclusive in the eyes of legal men. Of course you kept a copy ? "

" No," replied Laura, " on this occasion, I never made a copy. "

" I guess it," said Margaret with a laugh, " I guess it, you foolish girl, you have written to Law to ask your last hope as to Albert's return ; that is it, you dare not deny it, for you ever speak the truth. Come, tell me, girl, have I guessed right ? "

“ Not exactly, Margaret,” replied Laura, as she endeavoured to pass on to her room.

“ Oh, then you have written for more money to give to the poor. Remember, Laura, I have fifty pounds of yours, and that is surely enough to give in charity in our small village; to be sure the poor all bless you for a guardian saint, and as you pass, the boys and girls bow down to you as the mistress of Raven Castle—was that the object of your letter?”

“ I do not want money, Margaret; I am too poor to do all I could wish for the needy, and if I was even at the last shilling of my money here and wanted more, I would not insult your friendship by applying for it elsewhere.”

“ Ah! you cunning girl, that is evading the question. I asked if that was the purport of the letter?”

“ No,” replied Laura in a good humour, “ puzzle your ingenuity a little more, and, I will answer for it, you do not guess the subject; when meet I you next dear, you shall try again.”

Laura rushed past her and threw herself

upon the sofa in her own room, whilst Lady de Lancy, baffled in her hope, felt the desire of fathoming this incident more and more. She walked slowly to and fro, in the long drawing room, her eyes resting upon the broad expanse of the ocean ; there was a speck upon it, the glass magnified it into a ship.

CHAPTER II.

EVER since the appearance of the Jew and the Spaniard at Raven Castle, a very good look out had been established, and Blackburn had been, from his peculiar cleverness in distinguishing a smuggler from a coaster, or the coaster smuggler appointed as a kind of signal man; but as days and months had elapsed and no vessel had appeared likely to be officered by such a man as Albert, the vigilance relapsed into indifference, and half the schooners from Baltimore might have landed at the only landing place, and no notice have been taken of them. The sudden discovery of this vessel, which Lady de Lancy had honoured by noticing; her coming at the very moment when her anxiety was the greatest, the cunning manner Laura had evaded her questions, and the circum-

stance of the letter, made the sudden discovery of this vessel an object of more interest than if half the navy had manœuvred off the coast. A note was instantly dispatched to Rawlinson, and the dark looking Blackburn was placed on the look out. The vessel, although a very rakish looking craft, skimmed by with a fair wind, and soon was lost in the distance, to leeward.

“She is gone, Sir,” said Blackburn; “and without the wind changes she could not regain her ground until to-morrow.”

“That’s right,” said Rawlinson; “shut that door; when you and I talk, we don’t want any long-eared nimble-tongued women to overhear us; firstly, what brought you back before your time?”

“I went faster than I thought: I met a man in a gig, who gave me a lift on the road, and I was equally fortunate in my return.”

“Why it’s a miracle man, two gigs going along so deserted a road as this! Well, you got to the cottage—now go on.”

“It’s just the place as will suit your purpose,

Sir. It stands at least a quarter of a mile from the road, and is not visible from it; it is small, tidy, and comfortable—a woman might scream murder until her throat was sore, and no blessed creature but an old woman of seventy understand the language.”

“Does she live in the house?”

“At present; but she is to go to a small kind of gardener’s house which is not far off, yet far enough to be out of sight and hearing; or if you particularly require it, I can put her out of both.”

“Did you make any agreement about the price?”

“I said I wanted it for myself, for three months during the winter; that I was fond of rummaging the mountains for birds, and that for the present, an uncle of mine who had just married a young woman, would live in it, but that I should come and see them safe.”

“Did you mention when the young lady would arrive?”

“I said in a few days; in the mean time, I told them to light some fires, for the house felt cold,

and asked the old woman to put on her spectacles and dislodge some spiders which seem to have the range of the apartments unmolested."

"It is all well arranged; but did you see if there were any kitchen utensils?"

"Quite enough for three of us; the old lady says she can cook a bit, when she can get it to cook, but that for the last month she has not seen a soul with a blue apron and steel hanging to him, and poor old soul she doubted, if the butchers had not left the country and gone to town to see the illuminations for the large ship fight, that I told her about."

"We must send some things there to-morrow, and then all is prepared."

"Aye! all, but one thing; you forget, master, that in these concerns any rope in England might be strong enough to hang all concerned. Now I have no doubt that when it came to the law of the business, you would slip your neck out of the noose and leave me to dangle at the gibbets; and so before we begin, I should like to touch a little of the blunt."

“What will you undertake to get her in safety there for?”

“Why, if am to find carriage, and get one as won’t say a word that is English you know, and place her there until you come and feed the like of her well, and run the risk of being hung in the bargain. I am thinking, thirty pounds not too much to ask.”

“Say twenty, and I’ll pay the money.”

“Gentlemen ought never to quarrel about trifles, split the difference, say twenty-five pounds; give us twenty now, and the five when it’s all snug?”

“I’ve no objection to come into half the proposition, but I propose it should be reversed, that is, that I give you five pounds now, and the twenty when the job’s done.”

“Well, I knows your honor well; you never went from your word as a matter of business yet, and so, as you see, I’ll agree to it. Count them out in gold, they always look so pretty.”

“There, take your five pounds, and now it’s understood.”

“ Yes, the money part ; understood well enough, but how is the job to be done ? ”

“ You must look out like a cat after its prey, and pounce upon her when she takes those sentimental walks, about four o’clock.”

“ But suppose it rains, and she does not walk, why I shall be obliged to pay for the chaise, and soon have no more of this money than would jingle on a tombstone.”

“ Don’t take her in a post-chaise, you lout you, get your own covered cart with a trotter in it, place her out of sight, then what nobody sees, nobody suspects.”

“ You are a man of wisdom, surely,” said Blackburn, “ lord love me, why I intended to take her like a lady.”

“ Take her in a hearse if you like, only take her.”

“ The day, Sir ? ”

“ Any day after to-morrow ; here take this key of the shrubbery, it will admit you by the gate opposite. Sir Ronald you know will not notice *your* being there, and Lady de Lancy will imagine you were sent to assist the gardener.

By the bye, I will arrange that, it will give you a right to be there at all times—be here to-morrow at twelve.”

“ I shan’t fail, if you desire it.”

“ Prudence, Blackburn, prudence ; do not go to the public house and show the money, or boast of having so much in your possession, it would excite suspicion, and the rector’s mind is not at rest about that pocket handkerchief, although he has ascertained that Herbert is alive. You must appear poor, although you will soon grow rich. Does Sir Ronald ever speak to you now ?”

“ Yes, Sir ; whenever he meets me, he gives me something and so on, but he never mentions *that*, you know.”

“ Good, Blackburn, that will do ; be here to your time, and remember, that those who faithfully serve me, I never forget.”

“ No !” said Blackburn, as he got clear of the house, “ and hang me if ever I intend you shall ; this is a good business, and I’ll turn it to more advantage than smuggling. The key of the shrubbery that leads right to the

back part of the house where the plate is sometimes left: if I do it, who will accuse me? Sir Ronald, no, he is safe, this red headed fellow?—There's little fear of that; but one at a time; I do his business for him now, and I mistake if the lout—I shan't forget that in a hurry, won't return him the compliment with interest; why, what if she screams a bit, Johnny can drive the cart, and I can gag her, only these young ones have such sharp voices, and open their mouths so wide, that it requires a truss of straw to choke them. Now, I'll just go home and teach Johnny to drive a bit, for as to work, I've given up that for the next three months. Cold weather in the morning never agreed with me yet, and my wife likes late breakfasts." Thus murmuring to himself, the worst person in the parish walked leisurely home, only occasionally stopping to call some of his old friends by their names, asking them how they liked toiling like dray horses, and shaking his pockets, promised them some beer if they did their work well.

It was not of course unobserved by the

neighbours how comfortable Mrs. Blackburn appeared, how little she worked, how well her children were dressed, how idle was her husband, and how frequently he was to be seen at dusk walking suspiciously towards the coast ; yet smuggling was rarely heard of, and no thefts disgraced the village ; but one thing was evident, Blackburn was always unemployed ; but Blackburn had always more money in his pockets, and was more boisterous from his punctuality of payment at the public house, than any one of its frequenters. On the day in question he was peculiarly facetious ; and although he seemed much elated, he seemed more cautious than usual.

The following day was the one on which Laura was to give her answer ; and on that morning she was later, and Margaret earlier than ever ; no letters had arrived, and the usual arguments of the infidelity of men, and the base usage to which the female sex were habituated, were resorted to. Rawlinson, from a matter of delicacy, was not present, so

the tea and toast arguments and remarks, went on much as usual.

“Come, Laura,” said Margaret, “you must see how anxious I am to contribute to the happiness of my father; what is your determination; you fixed upon this day yourself, and therefore I have less hesitation in asking you. I am well aware that your modesty would have prevented your speaking, and therefore I began the subject.”

Laura for some moments was silent; she did not wish to give her pain from whom she had received so much kindness; but her mind was made up, and delay only made the matter worse, as it rendered her subject to the accusation of duplicity. “I have, Margaret, come to the determination to which I intend to adhere; I have long in silence, and in secrecy, nursed the love I have confessed for Albert, that love would have died a secret, had not Albert’s confession of it in the ball-room made it public; he left me under a sacred promise, that nothing but his death should prevent his

return. It is true he has never written one word, but the letters may have miscarried. It is true he has not returned, but the winds might not have been propitious, or the voyage so expeditiously made as he had calculated; besides, Margaret, I have a scruple which I shall mention, firstly imploring you not to think I mean it as any thing personal. I cannot so quickly change; I have examined my heart, and find it wholly his—and do not be angry with me, I cannot so suddenly change from youth to a grandfather; your kindness to me merits this explanation. I see his attentions, but I cannot return his affection. I therefore feel myself the means of creating some unhappiness, which I would not do intentionally on this ground, for I never can be sufficiently grateful to you; it is my intention to leave the castle within a day or two.”

“And that,” interrupted Margaret, “was the subject of your letter to Mr. Law?”

“It was; I expect him down to-morrow night, and I have no doubt you will be, ac-

cording to your known hospitality, delighted to see him for one night."

"As your friend, my dear Laura, he is most welcome, but he is so wayward a man, that I doubt if he will accept of the invitation."

There was a sneering manner in the expression, a lighting up of the countenance which now blazed with anger, that even Laura, innocent as she was, could not mistake, she burst into tears, and rushing towards Margaret, said, "Forgive me, dear Margaret, for the displeasure I have occasioned you; but it is no easy matter for one so deeply engaged to Albert, to remodel her heart, to rub out all that has rendered so many days of happiness, and to fill the void occasioned by such an event, by to me, almost a stranger."

"A stranger, why he has known you twice the time of Albert."

"Time is time, but love measures not time by its minutes: it flies when with those we love, it lingers long, terribly long, when we are not so disposed."

“ I am sorry, my dear,” said Margaret, rising, “ that you have found your sojourn here so terribly long. I had hoped that you were comfortable, during the time your prospects were in jeopardy, and I regret even the small time you have to remain, since those long flagging hours may linger into months in imagination, in the presence of those you cannot love.”

“ Unkind, ungenerous Margaret,” said Laura, rising from her seat, “ all that gratitude for a great kindness can demand, I owe and cheerfully acknowledge the debt to you,—nay, I can never forget it, and I should well merit the name of the most ungrateful of women, if I did not acknowledge it ; but still it is my duty to speak plainly on the other subject. That I have done ; and I feel my heart relieved, by having boldly declared that no other shall reign here, whilst Albert de Lancy lives.”

“ It is useless saying more ; I will instantly relate your determination to my father ; he will no longer intrude his unwelcome company upon Miss Laura Mackenzie. You may dry those

tears, they make the eyes unbecomingly red ; but I forget, as you have no lover to rebuke your appearance, it is indifferent ;—pray do not allow the servant for whom I have rung to witness the finale of this scene, remember Mr. Law is most welcome.”

Laura rushed to her room, and there gave vent to her sorrows; there was not one to whom she could communicate her grief; the gaunt severe countenance of Sir Ronald, although it had once relaxed into kindness, was not very inviting for a young lady. Margaret’s manner was enough to rebuke the greatest affection; and Rawlinson she hated; even the lady’s-maid she knew she could not trust; and perhaps there is no moment so truly distressing to the young and the innocent, as when they have a load upon their minds, and can find no kind spirit to share in, or to listen to the tale.

From Laura’s window she overlooked the shrubbery; she saw the servant run with a note to Rawlinson’s house, and she saw the man return with the answer; she felt lighter, the news was communicated, there was nothing

more to be concealed ; but she had yet a pang to suffer. The servant brought back a note for her, in which Mr. Rawlinson pathetically regretted her determination, and promised no longer to intrude his society upon that of Laura's, at the same time mentioning his willingness to assist her, to the utmost of his power, in any legal matters, should such necessity arise before the appearance of Mr. Law.

The letter was scarcely read before Lady de Lancy entered ; her eyes were red, her countenance apparently humbled ; she began by soliciting pardon for her former haste and unkindness, it was merely the moment of disappointment. She had so much dwelt upon the hope, that she could not command her prudence or her temper, when that hope was dashed to the ground ; she had pictured to herself the delight her father would have experienced, by the announcement that his affections had been favourably received ; his letter was written in the meekest manner, it breathed his love

for Laura, but excused her determination on the score of his age.

“ It is now over, dear Laura ; you will feel yourself relieved from the conscientious discharge of your duty, and my father will seek elsewhere a companion, now he can no longer hope to share his life with you. Come, child, dry your tears, you are a good girl to weep at the pain you unconsciously give another, and I love you more since I have seen how firm you are, when placed in so trying a situation ; the fresh air will revive us both, shall we ride to-day ? ”

The sudden change in Lady de Lancy’s countenance, as she asked the question, the strict caution, nay injunction, of Sir Ronald, alarmed Laura ; and she refused upon the plea that her head ached most violently, and that the motion of the horse would render it worse.

“ As you like,” said Lady de Lancy. “ My dear, I feel always better for a rapid ride, when I am low spirited ; there is nothing exhilarates so much as the quick pace ; I shall ride and

only regret that I have not you for a companion."

"Does Sir Ronald go with you, Margaret?"

"No, I shall be all alone and melancholy from solitude, but I advise you to walk if you do not ride. At this time of the year, we must avail ourselves of every moment, for soon the snow and the bleak winds, will keep us at home."

"I can take my usual turn in the garden, by and bye, when no one will see how wretched I have been throughout the day; believe me, dear Margaret, there is no pang like that we feel we inflict upon another; the revengeful and the mean watch the effect of the word they utter, and feel an inexpressible pleasure in witnessing the pain it occasions; the innocent and the bold shrink from inflicting a wound they would not openly avow. I trust in an hour or two I shall feel better, in the mean time, I envy you the ride I could not now enjoy."

"It will give you some occupation, dear Laura, to collect a nosegay, there are but few

flowers left in the garden, but yet towards the little gate there are some. That warm corner always supplies us, when the pride of the parterre is flown.

“ I will bring you the best the garden affords, be assured ; now good bye, do not lose the fine part of the day in talking to me ; there is a large cloud gathering and you will have some rain.”

Laura was alone ; she now weighed the apparently frivolous conversation of Margaret. Throughout she saw one drift, to get her out of the house, if even for a walk ; whilst the words of Sir Ronald evidently uttered to warn her of some danger, were imperative as to her remaining close at home ; and yet, argued the innocent girl, what danger can await me in the premises of the magistrate ; he who can, by one dash of his pen avert impending danger, and who if aware of such danger, is ever the first to guard against it. It must have been meant as a caution to me, not to throw myself in the way of Rawlinson, who might insult me by a repetition of his offer, even after so posi-

tive a refusal. Who can enter into this garden? and if twenty entered, who could within bow shot of the house insult me? and yet the words were imperative, he said: "never leave this castle's gate, even for a furlong;" and then, I was not flatly to refuse him, but to dally with his affections until the week expired, this I have omitted; my honour rose against duplicity, I could not reconcile myself to such an act; for then I should have nurtured what I intended to blight. These, and such thoughts occupied the mind of Laura, as she began to select several of her choicest goods, and with peculiar care amused herself in packing them for the long journey she had to make; the jewel case was her greatest care, there was the splendid plume, sparkling in the bright daylight; she placed it on her head and with a little of that vanity which prevents a lady from passing a looking glass without looking into it, she boldly faced the mirror, and varied the position of the magnificent jewellery, as it best suited her fair and delicate features. Others were tried, the whole box was emptied; she then

busied herself in taking a list of the articles with the descriptions of them, and then for the first time, she became aware of the large fortune she possessed, and the delicacy of Albert in thus placing within her reach a sufficiency, an elegant sufficiency in the event of his death. At last even the female love of looking at trinkets, of handling ornaments and at gazing at one's own face, (the last lasts the longest,) ceased; the box was carefully enveloped in thick paper, and it was directed to Mr. Law's house—or chambers—in Chancery Lane.

The weather was still fine, the nosegay promised, and Laura the pretty innocent Laura was soon equipped ready for her walk; she gave a last look at the glass—what female heart can resist this innocent gratification? and with a sigh, occasioned perhaps by the recollections of him who had so generously shielded her against poverty, she descended the stairs and walked to the garden. As she passed, she saw Blackburn dressed like a gardener—for gardeners have uniforms—was busily employed in turning

over some ground ; she was for some time close to him before he spoke, he then addressed her with great civility and respect saying, that there were some flowers further down, whilst those which she was now gathering were nearly faded, those beyond were in their best bloom. “ I’ll show you where they are,” he continued, and walking onwards he led the way towards the little gate, which opened not far from Rawlinson’s house ; Laura well knew that through that gate Rawlinson passed and repassed, and she was apprehensive that her ill luck might throw her in his way, and subject her to some very unpleasant conversation ; Blackburn stopped to dig up a weed and Laura passed him.

“ Now I have her,” said the cool villain to himself, “ and yet how to open that cursed gate to force her through ? all is ready outside, it is but one effort, and in a moment she would be safe.” Such were the first ideas of the villain, but the possession of the key led him to hope that he might, in the first place, possess himself of the jewels, which had often been the subject of conversation in the village. The

Jew's visit had been babbled in the servant's hall, and all things done in a castle, or all things done in a country village, serve by the excitement they give, to dissipate the horrid monotony of such human banishments ; hence old tattlers and retailers of gossip and scandal congregate in villages, or exist in country towns.

Laura was in the act of gathering the flowers when the unhesitating villain got close to her, he had wound up his resolution to the deed, and was on the point of advancing when Sir Ronald's deep voice, was heard calling upon Blackburn ; he startled, so did Laura. " Go to your work, Sir," said the Baronet, fixing upon him an intelligent eye ; the ruffian seemed awed by the unusual tone of his master ; whilst Sir Ronald advanced and assisting Laura to collect her flowers, walked with her back to the house ; as she entered, he said : " The weather is getting too cold for one of your delicacy, you have not followed my injunctions or advice in all things."

CHAPTER III.

THAT day passed off, the dinner was dull and heavy, but afterwards Laura was agreeably surprised to find Sir Ronald did not retire as usual to his room, and to his classical researches. He was disposed to join in the conversation, and when relaxing into his habitual apathy, or rather burying himself in his own thoughts, he asked for some music to cheer him up, and Laura ran hastily to the window, near which the piano was placed, in the moonlight, she saw two men, who seemed cautious to avoid discovery, by hiding themselves, as the light appeared at the window. It was not yet winter enough to shut out the stars and the moon, nor bleak enough to close the rooms for the season.

Laura sung delightfully, not in that miserable manner we sometimes see, when the countenance is distorted, the mouth forced wide open, and the breath pumped up with difficulty—painful to the victim, disgusting to the listener. Her pure voice came as from a flute; there was no effort, no straining after effect, the close and accurate shake was as clear and as marked as the note of the thrush; and unconsciously she went from song to song. Sir Ronald left his chair, and walked to the piano; but Laura remarked, that although he was apparently attentive to her song, that his eyes wandered from her to the window, until at last he took up his position there, apparently gazing at the stars, astronomy being with him a favourite science.

“How still and beautiful every thing looks,” said Laura, as she rose from the piano, and stood by the side of the man, who within a few hours had grown a great favorite with the lovely girl.

“All is still as death,” said Sir Ronald, “and man sleeps, whilst the watchful eye in

those thousand stars are awake and beaming ; that beautiful harmony cannot be the result of chance. An astronomer sees in the arrangement of the firmament above as much uniformity of design, as the surgeon discovers in the anatomy of the human being ; and if from the lowest animal, which creeps through its existence, or the wide spreading wings of the eagle, up to the master piece in man, we trace the same wisdom, the same wonderful design, the same harmony, that the astronomer remarks in the wonderful arrangements of omnipotence ; who can doubt the unerring wisdom of that great, that wonderful architect ? Yet man, he at least, who contributes to all the wants of man, borne down by his daily toil ; gladly wraps himself in the warm blankets, and sleeps unconscious of the glory, the sublimity of night, whilst those whose minds might revel in the luxury of its knowledge, lose their existence in the frivolous amusements of crowded rooms, and waste their breath in the degrading conversation of fashion and its follies. It is melancholy to think,

that now, whilst the deepest knowledge could be gleaned from that living book, all men sleep !”

“ Not all,” said Laura with a smile, as she interrupted the baronet, in one of his many moral moments, “ for I saw two men just now, pass from that walk into the other.”

“ Hah !” ejaculated Sir Ronald, his eyes rivetted to the last indicated spot, and at that moment he saw, or thought he saw, what Laura had remarked.

“ Upon my word,” said Lady de Lancy, as she advanced to the window, “ these moonlight murmurs, and the morning tête-à-tête, seem wonderfully to have drawn you together. Laura, I shall be jealous of you, if Sir Ronald explains the stars to you by night, and in the morning devotes his time and attentions to you ; come from the window, I see nothing so very unusual in a bright evening, or moon-lit night. Laura, another song ; that sweet voice of yours, gave me a delightful musing, which, having died with the sound that awakened it to life, leaves me ten times more sad than heretofore, as, to borrow one of Sir Ronald’s

wise remarks, the lightning brightens for a second, and then leaves the wonder-stricken mortal in more profound darkness. Come, come, stars will shine another night, and we can study them alone ; music, Laura, music ! it's rarely we have heard you, and now on the eve of your departure, you make us regret the loss, even in anticipation."

" Sing, Laura," said Sir Ronald, keeping his eyes fixed upon the spot, " sing !"

Laura complied, whilst Margaret, taking her husband's hand, and with an impressive look, endeavoured to draw him from the window.

" It shall not be, I say," said Sir Ronald aloud, as he advanced and rang the bell ; " in my house the simplest servant shall be protected ; and shall my visitor be subjected to insult ? I see the drift, Margaret, of all this, and thank those stars for the kind light they have shed upon this subject."

The servant came, Sir Ronald whispered, and the man withdrew, whilst the unconscious Laura kept warbling to the most inattentive audience ; the time crept on, and the general

hour of retiring to bed had passed, before Lady de Lancy hinted the hour, and complained of the sleepiness which her ride had occasioned. She kissed her guest warmly, apparently sincerely, and after thanking Laura for her kindness they separated.

Laura was no sooner in her own chamber than she knelt down, as was her custom, and fervently prayed for the protection of that great power, who watches over the innocent, and guards the weak and defenceless, by the powerful shield of his omnipotence. It was perhaps the happiest hour of her existence, when she knelt in the seclusion of her own chamber, and there rendered thanks for all the blessings bestowed upon her ; her devotion was disturbed by a slight tap at her door, and Lady de Lancy in her dressing gown entered ; this unexpected, unusual visit alarmed Laura, who instantly summoned all her courage to meet the conversation.

“ I cannot sleep, dear Laura, and yet I felt fatigued ; my father had for the first time these two years, excepting when away from his re-

sidence, missed his evening visit, and I can fancy how lonely, how desponding he must be, in the solitude of his own house. I cannot ask you to alter your determination, for I saw how much happier you became, when you announced this morning that resolution to which you had come, and I, like a bad spirit, uneasy in my own abode, am come to pester my best friend with my uneasiness." Laura was silent, she seemed at any rate to have profited by the remark of Sir Ronald, that when people were inclined to speak, listen.

" You are silent, Laura, silent and reserved, I cannot tell the reason ; you cannot wonder that a girl should forward the views of her father, or aid him in his endeavours to find a companion, some more worldly minded would thwart him ; for at his death, his large fortune must descend to me ; but I am not one of those who find a pleasure in the increase of wealth. Here it is useless, I could not spend it, I would rather give some to portion a girl, whose husband he is to become, and lose all

prospects in the future, than see him miserable in his solitude."

"It will be but a few days, and I shall relieve you, my dear Margaret, of the unfortunate beauty which has attracted his notice; pray do not make me miserable by forcing all of this day again upon my mind."

"I see you are already making preparations for departure; this case addressed to Mr. Law, seems the jewel case; take care of it, for it is valuable; but I fear it has been acquired in a manner not strictly consonant with honor."

"Good night," said Laura, interrupting her, "good night." She locked her door as Lady de Lancy withdrew, and feeling overpowered by the remark she opened her window, a sudden breeze extinguished the light, and with the exception of the moon's beams, the unhappy girl was in darkness. She preferred undressing in the dark, to the chance of a further conversation with Lady de Lancy. It was a beautiful night; scarcely an autumnal leaf in premature death, fell from the trees; all was cal-

culated to lead the mind into serious thoughts, and to one already melancholy, night had its charms, which darkness enhanced. She wrapped herself closely up, and kneeling at the window, she began again her prayers. Laura was not a girl who prayed because she had been made to pray, and custom established the dull routine over which many fall asleep; her prayers arose from a heart deeply impressed with the necessity of calling upon Him, who is the father of the fatherless, and the words came forth, slowly, solemnly, sincerely, unlike those who huddle into their beds, and devote one minute out of twenty four hours to repeat a few words which were made familiar to them in the nursery, and at the close of which, the word Amen becomes a part of the sentence, uttered with such rapidity, that no stop intervenes; unlike those, Laura shaped her prayer to her wants. The words rose spontaneously from the heart; she was a religious girl. Her prayers were finished without interruption, and she sat a little distance from the window, to avoid the cold air,

when suddenly she heard the whispering voice of a man beneath the casement ; she listened, she heard it was the voice of Rawlinson, and she could not mistake the other, it was that of Sir Ronald de Lancy.

“ I tell you,” the first said, “ her fortune is immense ; far beyond ours or her best expectations ; you have gained yours by an act doubly culpable, and now you will not let me grasp the object by which that fortune must come.”

“ Not in my house I swear ! if I roll a corpse upon the staircase, and lie dead upon my father’s couch, no one shall harm her here. The lowest Arab, who takes a stranger beneath his miserable roof, is responsible, by the common law of hospitality, for his welfare, and his security. I may be a bad christian, but I will not be worse than a dirty Arab of a desert.”

“ For God’s sake, finish these allusions, we are arranging about my fortune, and you talk about Arabs and deserts ; she must be mine, and you must aid me.”

“ Your’s she may be certainly with her con-

sent, and I should not interpose to prevent it, but in my house—”

“ *Your* house !” interrupted Rawlinson, whose violent temper was in the ascendant ; “ Your house !—your fortune ! I could strip the peacock of its gaudy feathers, and leave the carcass of the jack-daw upon the lawn. Beware !—”

“ Who is that ?” said Sir Ronald.

Laura crept to the window, and she saw a third party with a long ladder.

“ To your bed, Blackburn,” said Sir Ronald, “ I swear that if this attempt is further followed I will lay you a corpse at my feet ; go, this instant go, or—the cock of a pistol was heard, this is your last moment.”

Blackburn had got much too good a situation to lose it, and its comforts, all at once ; he very quietly, in spite of Rawlinson’s signs, placed the ladder on the ground, and said, “ Don’t be desperate, that’s a gemman,” and walked off.

“ What would the world say, Rawlinson, if such a deed were done in my house ? think better of

it ; your precipitation would hurry the impending ruin, for I feel that sooner or later this false tenure"—here the voice died in the distance, and the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

“ What can this mean ?” said Laura, as she gently closed the window, and cautiously fastened the shutters. “ I must be the object—and, those fatal jewels, the attraction ; could Margaret have known this and by way of apprizing me of my danger, opened the window ?—My mind misgives me ; she could not do it to facilitate her father’s object, it is impossible ; and how could this plan be executed ? perhaps to enter my window, and then to save the scandal which would kill me, force a marriage ! I will not believe that one of our sex could ever assist a man to such a diabolical consummation.”

There was no sleep to induce those beautiful dreams, which make the awakement to life a pain ; there was no silent, slight, still slumber in which the object of a daily thought stands and converses with us in plain reality, when the sentiments of the heart are lavished on him

we adore, and dreams of love and pleasure weaken us into lassitude; no, as her eyes closed and the mind was but half-absorbed in sleep, the window would open in imagination and the scared girl with a beating heart, and quickened pulse, would start almost from her bed with scarcely time to check the screams upon her tongue;—again the influence of fatigue would weigh down her eye lids;—the door opens—the figure of Blackburn with a nosegay would enter, and the frightened girl in cold perspiration, startles again to life. She could not divest herself of the idea that she heard the measured step of Sir Ronald guarding her, and once, so evident was the sound, that she felt secure for a time. The long hours seemed ten times longer, and the first dawn was hailed with all the delight of those who pay their early adorations to the living object of Omnipotence, and bow before the sun; then indeed came security, and then that soft refreshing sleep which obliterates misery, and leaves the few hours of its power a lapse of life—a total oblivion in which not one thought,

not one supposed action could be traced. Who is there, who enjoys sound health who can say he *lives* the allotted period of his existence, six hours of every twenty four? A fourth of life must be subtracted; we may reach seventy years of existence, but we actually live but fifty two or fifty three years.

“What cannot wine perform?” says Horace. Rawlinson had become desperate over his bottle, he had formed his determination; he linked himself with a rogue, and he was determined to gain his end; he knew that sooner or later, as Sir Ronald said “something would come to light concerning the will.” He saw that Sir Ronald sincerely repented the rash act to which he had consented, and that although the hand of fellowship in all its best sincerity, might be held out by one brother to another, that he, hated, despised by Albert, could not hope to be spared; he was now planning the desperate scheme of providing sufficient funds for his maintenance, and of retiring to America. His first object was Laura! with her consent he knew he could not succeed. The man once

dipped in crime has seldom any aversion to dive deeper ; the first plunge is the serious one ; man gets accustomed to evil as infants may be taught to swallow olives. The practised duellist faces his adversary with more coolness than the novice although the novice be the braver man ; custom makes even crime familiar, until a crowning murder finishes the career, and the gallows becomes the record of the ill spent life.

To obtain Laura any how, was a sure fortune. Rawlinson always had on his lips—money *de jure marito* ; he must be married, and of that, if his first scheme succeeded he was certain ; to forward that scheme, he sacrificed every consideration, and his daughter aided and abetted in the act.

Another day had passed, the next would bring Law's answer ; in those days the mails were slow to forward communications ; no railroad speed was known ; no delivery of letters in five hours, at the distance of one hundred miles, ever entered the imagination as likely to occur. People made wills, when they

travelled so great a distance, and the rumble of a carriage was as rare as the rumble of an earthquake.

Rawlinson knew the full value of time, and was one of those men who availed himself of every opportunity; his watchful eye never slumbered when his point might be lost by any inattention, and now his worthy coadjutor, Blackburn, whose covered cart stood hard by with Johnny as the driver, was at his new employment, although he had been desired by Sir Ronald to give up the spade, and leave his situation in the shrubbery. Rawlinson had superseded the order; crime levels all distinction—all authority; the early part of the day was passed without a chance of success, but about two o'clock, a gleam of hope appeared, and Laura was seen carefully sauntering down the shrubbery; Blackburn instantly concealed himself; she passed, humming a tune and twisting a thread round some of the fading beauties of the garden. She appeared lost in a profound reverie, and heedless of where she walked.

Far otherwise was the watchful Blackburn ; his eyes were ever on her, whilst his body was concealed by some trees, behind one of which he slipped as she advanced. His pulse beat high. She was walking to her ruin, as incautiously as innocence ever walks before suspicion alarms her ; he trod as lightly as a zephyr ; he unfolded from under his green apron, a shawl, which he held wrapped round his left arm, and with his right extended to keep his balance even, he trod as circumspectly as a rope dancer.

Laura advanced to the warm corner, whilst Blackburn, stealing between the trees, opened the door which led upon the road ; he returned, creeping cautiously to within a few paces of her ; he waited with admirable patience, until the unconscious girl stooped down to select some flowers ; he stepped nimbly, but stealthily towards her, threw the shawl over her head, and fastening his arms round her waist, keeping the shawl firmly over her, caught her up in his powerful grasp, and carried, in spite of her fruitless exertions to liberate herself, and her half-stifled screams for assistance,

the struggling Laura to the cart. He never spoke, but placed her concealed from any person, with his hand tight over her mouth, whilst the young fry of treachery, whipped the willing horse, and the cart was quickly conveyed through the village. On gaining the other side, the hand was relaxed, and the faint effort of Laura, to cry for assistance, relapsed into silence. Then came all the misery that a vivid imagination portrays to a distressed mind; she at once comprehended the conversation she had overheard, and the warning voice of Sir Ronald; how he could be acquainted with such an idea, and not at once take more efficient means to repress the assault, never occurred to her. She saw in all he had done the action of a friend, but by whom she was entrapped she could not tell; it could not be Rawlinson, that she was assured, but that she was a prisoner from his plan, and his desire she could not doubt. The wheels seem to turn rapidly round, and each moment, as it were, estranged her from Raven Castle, and cast an additional gloom upon her mind, she could

not move, for once or twice she had endeavoured to rise, meaning to regain her liberty, but the strong hand of him who was guilty of abduction, held her down ; he used no more violence than was requisite on such an occasion, and throughout the whole journey not a word was spoken. At last she felt the cart turn off the high road, the quick trot subsided into a slow walk, whilst the cart, as it vibrated from side to side, bore witness from the jolting, that the road was not much frequented by any but carts, the ruts were deep, or the ground naturally uneven. Her destiny was soon to be known, each minute now appeared an age, as each effort of the almost wearied animal conveyed her beyond the reach and the sight of friends. She now began to think of the value of her jewels, and the means of converting those to her safety ; she spoke clearly, but not loudly, and she offered her abductor any sum to restore her to Raven Castle.

“ Any sum,” said Blackburn, who now felt himself in security “ is no sum ; when we deal for money, we always know the weight.”

“ Will one hundred pounds bribe you to do a just act ?”

“ Aye, Miss, that it would ; but don’t you see, a hundred guineas are not carried in every lady’s pockets, so I presume you have not got that about you.”

“ No, I have not,” said Laura, “ but I have that at Raven Castle, which will procure more than ten times the sum.”

“ That’s a sight of money. Johnny, my boy, you go to school and get flogged for those crooked figures you make on the slate, how much will ten times a hundred guineas make ?”

“ That’s more figures than ever I made yet,” replied the boy.

“ It will make a thousand guineas,” said Laura, “ and I will give you one hundred of them to-morrow, if you will return me to where you took me from.”

“ Aye, Miss, and then the magistrate and the goaler will come, and you’ll kiss the book, and tell the truth, and I, honest Joe Blackburn, will have to go to prison.”

“ By the most sacred oath that ever fell from the lips of human creatures, I never will mention your name, or this circumstance to any one. I will return to the house, feign some excuse for my long absence, give you the money, and pray that you may be forgiven the sins you may have committed.”

“ Let’s look at your face, for you speak like a parson.” He took the shawl from her head, and Laura raised herself up.

“ Gently, gently, my little lady,” replied Blackburn, “ your eyes won’t serve you much here, for if you were put down now, without you followed the track of the wheel, which by to-morrow will be lost, you never would find your way back, so look at me full in the face and tell me all about these guineas.”

Laura, with much earnestness, related what she had before said ; “ Think,” she added, “ what you would feel, if your only daughter was thus torn from you ; if she you loved were in an instant snatched from your sight, perhaps never again to see you ; in spite of the committal of the deed, you are a man, a hus-

band, a father, and the appeal of innocence must reach your heart."

"There, Miss, you may cut short that fine speech ; I've no more heart than a turnip, and I'm just about as cool, so do you see all the business about father, mother, and son, is so much waste of words. Stop, Johnny, a bit, you are jolting the lady into a jelly, and before she melts away, we may as well see what we can make of this matter," the cart stopped. "There now, Miss, take breath, for its rough work for that tender build of yours. I've often wondered you don't drop in halves, you're so precious thin about the ribs. Now as I told you, don't think to gammon me about long words and such like, but do you hear, talk about those guineas, you have not got them in the house, have you?"

"No," said Laura, but she added, suddenly recollecting herself, "I have fifty pounds in money there, and you shall have that two minutes after you arrive."

"If I was only sure of that, and the other half to come next day, we might do a little

business here, and take from both. Ah," said he, "as the thought occurred to him, "I am to get twenty guineas when you are lodged safely, and you are not far off, so that I must take you there first, and make you over, as we do a keg of run spirits."

"To whom? for God's sake tell me to whom?"

"Why to an old woman, who can't eat you."

Laura felt a sudden hope, her own sex would not desert her; and she had spirit enough to face any woman, and fight for her liberty.

"A woman," she said, "what can be the object of this?"

"I dare say now, that you'd like a man better," continued the ruffian, not heeding the blush which coloured the poor girl's face; well that's natural, and you shall have a man to take care of you this evening. I'm sorry I'm obliged to leave you, but I've a little business in hand near the cliff, just about where the Baronet pushed old Herbert over, and left him

hanging, like the tail of a boy's kite to a tree." Laura's heart sunk within her; if her own safety had not been uppermost, what would she not have done to have pursued her inquiries concerning that affair.

"For heaven's sake," she said, preferring even Blackburn's company to that of some stranger, "do not leave me, do not leave one so young, so helpless, at such a minute."

"Why, Johnny my boy, bless my heart if I don't think she's in love with me; don't you hear how she asks me to stay with her, why she won't leave me. Bless your pretty little mouth, I could kiss it until to-morrow morning; don't look so shamed about it, why its nothing; put down your claws, or I'll soon let you know who's master now." The struggle was short, and Blackburn kissed her; "Now about this money, I've no time to waste; here's a bargain for you; I shall take you to the cottage, I shall take the twenty guineas from your man, Rawlinson; there don't shiver and shake, like a boy going to school on a frosty morning, and keep your teeth quiet, they make

as much noise as a watchman's rattle in London ; well, I shall leave you with him."

" For God's sake," said Laura, kneeling before him, " if ever any words of innocence could move your heart, do not leave me ?"

" I never knew a woman fall so desperate in love in my life ; I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself ; I shall leave you, but I'll go back and tell the Baronet where you are ; he'll come fast enough, and then you'll be rescued, and to-morrow—you know—the money ; a hundred guineas, and not a word said against honest Joe Blackburn."

" And is it for twenty guineas, this is to happen ? Listen, good man ;" and Laura put her delicate hand upon the ruffian's sleeve, " for every guinea that man is to give you, I will give you five to restore me safe, and uninjured. —now—"

" No !" said Blackburn, after due consideration ; " no, that's impossible, it can't be. I am an honourable man, and amongst us, as does business without an act of parliament, honour is honour, and no mistake. I have pledged my

honour to place you in his hands, and here's some of the guineas I received for it; I could not do it, not I; I teach my son John never to break his honour with any of us, and he'd just as soon bite his tongue off and give it to the dog to eat, as say a word about this; why if he told a lie, do you think one of us would not turn him out of the gang, as a disgrace to the whole body of us?—certain, sure, we should; and what's more, never speak to him again, as long as he lived."

"Is there any thing in the whole world, I can offer you to save me from that man?—If you will trust me, I will give you enough to place you in independence, to save you all the labour of your life; to make your son an honest man, and to redeem yourself."

"There now, I've done with you; drive on Johnny, gently my boy. You're just like that fat parson of our's, who promises us all manner of good things when we are dead, and can't claim them; if you had stuck at the first thing, there was a chance, but to talk about all that nonsense, I can't believe you, and like the rest

of you women, you see, you can't get into a fright, without telling a lie."

"Stop, boy, stop!" said the almost frantic girl; "stop, and hear me; implore your father to hear me again. Pray, Sir, do not leave me here; take me back, and God will reward you!"

"I thought as much," said the villain; "always long credits; exactly what the parson says; go on, Johnny, and don't stop without I tell you; there's the cottage, go to the back way."

"Mercy! mercy! mercy!" said Laura, "if you are dead to that call, may He above, be dead to your's hereafter."

"Hereafter! how far is that off?—next winter?"

"Soon, too soon it will come, and when you are on your death-bed, and each moment hurrying you to eternity, whilst your memory runs over the many crimes which have branded your guilt, then shall the mercy you deny to the innocent—the defenceless, give you no hope of forgiveness—no prospect of heaven."

“ Johnny, do you hear, how precious mad she’s got; she’s talking about dying in our *beds*; why we never bargained for that; and then about mercy, and heaven, and forgiveness—”

“ My eye, father !” said the boy, with a particular knowing look; “ we wants a dictionary to look out these words; I never heard one of them ever since I left school, and became an honest boy. Through this gate ?”

“ Yes, right on to the yard. Now before we get out, Miss, if you can talk sense, let us have a little of it; that goes a great way—do you stand to your bargain about the one hundred guineas ?”

“ I do, I do, and I pray you take the other offer—release me now—I will crawl back to the house—the secret shall be kept, and double the sum paid to-morrow.”

“ We are all agreed about the first, so that’s a do; give us your hand upon it; as for the other part, if it was not for my honour, I’d borrow a fresh horse and drive you back like a lady.”

“ When will he come ? ”

“ I dare say it won't be long, first ; he's very fond of you ; I fancy I see him rubbing his hands, and twisting his fingers in his carrotty hair. Don't say a word about the kiss.”

“ How long will it be before Sir Ronald can arrive ? ”

“ What's the hour ? ”

Laura looked at her watch—it was nearly four.

“ I dare say he'll be here about eight, or nine, or perhaps if the night's cold, he might come to-morrow morning. Now, then, give me your hand, and do you hear, the less you say the better.” The unresisting Laura stepped from the cart, and was conveyed into the house.

CHAPTER IV.

RAWLINSON soon learnt the abduction of Laura, and knowing very well the cottage to which she had been forcibly removed he soon prepared to follow. Now was his only time—he felt that his extravagance would finish in a direct denial of Sir Ronald to advance him more; for although the Baronet most sincerely repented the misdeeds of former days, yet he was prudent enough to save money for the day which might come. Frequently he had upbraided Rawlinson with his extravagance, and words had so often been exchanged between them of a hostile nature that each began to fear the tongue more than the hand of his adversary. Rawlinson knew no God but money,

and now he had it nearly within his grasp ; he had prepared one of those drunken companions whose names do for witnesses as well as the more trustworthy of society, to accompany him and his bride into Scotland ; there it would require but little ceremony to unite Laura to her persecutor. With almost drunken hope, Rawlinson left his house, taking with him a sufficiency of dress to last for a week.

In the mean time, the forlorn and miserable Laura was seated in a small room, with Blackburn for her only companion ; John had been sent to apprise Rawlinson of the success of the scheme, and the old woman, who once had ventured to lend the poor Laura some assistance, was sent to her own cottage, with a mighty curse from Blackburn, to keep her warm in her solitude.

“ You see, girl,” said Blackburn, to Laura, “ that in this world we are never safe ; it was but a few minutes ago, and you were walking in the garden ; by to-morrow, perhaps you will be far away from here.”

The affrighted girl startled at the idea, and asked "what he meant?"

"Why he is a curious man, and I am not answerable for what he does; I heard him say something about Scotland, and then returning here for a month, or so; but I'll do my best to speak to Sir Ronald, and if he *chooses*, he can always help it."

"Chooses!" said Laura, "can you doubt his willingness to assist me?"

"He may be willing enough to assist you, but you see, Miss, I am not so sure, if he dare do it."

"What do you mean?"

The loquacious Blackburn, who when with men was the very personification of discretion, was rather off his guard with a young lady, and spoke at random. "Why you see," he continued, "they are a pair of them: the son's a good son and does as the father wishes him; and the father's the best man alive for a trick; so now you understand me: then there's the lady—why she opened your shutters for me to get in the

other night, so I'm thinking, that between the three, with myself as an assistant, you are in a nice mess."

It was quite in vain Laura again and again implored her only companion to assist her in her flight—he was silent;—she made a desperate attempt to escape by the door, but in an instant she found the arm of Blackburn round her waist, herself lifted like a feather off her legs, and conveyed to the further end of the room; he merely said :

"Not so fast, my pretty bird—honour, is honour; you may get away after I have let you, if you can, but as I told you, I'm bound to deliver you safely into his hands, and so I will."

"Hear me," said the girl, as she threw herself on her knees before Blackburn, "hear me, and have mercy upon me. I am engaged to be married to Albert de Lancy," Blackburn startled, and took hold of her hands, "he is to be my husband—the man all the village respects and loves. I am a poor destitute orphan, there is no hand to rescue me, no ear to hear my prayer, but His, (she pointed upwards,) and

yours), the eye of Him is over us, He sees us now. If you are a man, as you say you are, rise up my friend, and save me ; Albert shall repay you a thousand fold, I will repay you more, much more than I promised ; and He who is the Father of the fatherless, will bless and reward you hereafter.”

Shocked by the force of the appeal, Blackburn looked at her with an eye of compassion, and endeavoured to raise her from the kneeling position. “ No,” she said, “ here must I remain, and you, an Englishman, will remember, that an unprotected girl knelt to you, as to a God ; implored your protection, and you refused it. Think, if your own daughter was taken from you by force, secreted in a miserable hovel, until the man she most hated came to use her with violence, to force her to be his wife, perhaps worse, how would you resent such injury, feeling as, and being, a man.”

“ I would wring the rascal’s neck as easily as I would dispose of a barn door fowl ?”

“ Then be a man now. Now before it is too late, before he comes. I am stronger than you

think, no difficulty, no danger can daunt me. Come, and He above will reward you."

"If I could give him back his five pounds, and not hear the echo of my own voice, I would do it ; but there is honour amongst us."

"Honour, Blackburn ! can there be honour in doing that which the heart tells you is wrong ? Oh mercy, mercy ! Great God, instruct me to shape my words, that he may hear me, and vouchsafe my prayer ! I implore you by your parents, who reared you, and who now sleep in death ;—by your own wife, your child, your own conscience, shield me, protect me, take me from this cursed house, or leave me to myself, and let me escape. Why there is a tear standing in your eye, before it runs down as the record of this crime, save me !" She sprang upon her feet, she felt she was not detained, she rushed to the door, it was but one bound more, and she reached the outer one—it was locked, and Blackburn had the key ; she called him, she implored him, and as she returned once more to follow up her suc-

cess, she saw Rawlinson approaching; it was too late, the change from hope to sudden despair overcame her, she gave a loud shriek, and fell motionless on the floor.

It was long ere she awoke: she was in bed, and by her side was the old woman, who had busily employed herself in rubbing her forehead with cold water; on the first motion of returning life and sense, words soon followed; the unhappy girl implored one of her own sex to assist her, and was refused, not from any unwillingness to do so good an act, but from the position of Rawlinson and his threats; he had sworn to murder the old woman if she attempted such an act, and had placed, in the most ingenious manner, the wire of a bell to the door, so that every attempt at an escape would be a signal to the ruffian of the intention; besides which, he was at that moment posting up and down, like a sentinel before the door.

Laura, on hearing his footsteps, placed her hand in an imploring attitude, and, with streaming eyes, looked at the old woman;

that she was answered in the affirmative was evident from the old creature taking her apron, and wiping away a tear from her old, and already dimmed eyes.

Those who meditate crime are ever watchful ; Rawlinson had heard the voice, and opened the door ; he did not disguise his intentions, he spoke out.

“ Laura,” he began, “ your conduct is shameful, but once more I am ready to forgive you ; few husbands would have borne this insult, and not have visited it strongly against the offender ; but I forgive you ; nay, do not attempt to speak in vindication of your behaviour, even this poor old woman is a witness that you, my wife, left my home with a vile labourer, a common fellow, and a felon, and carefully concealing yourself in a covered cart, came to her house.”

“ Believe him not, good woman,” gasped Laura, “ I am not his wife, as heaven is my witness, never, never !”

“ Shameful, shameful creature,” ejaculated Rawlinson, with a mockery of feeling wonder-

fully imitated ; “ hear her, old woman, she denies being my wife, and see the record of her lie upon her finger ; here is our marriage ring.”

“ Away,” said Laura, as she tore her hand from Rawlinson’s grasp, and taking the ring, which at the first moment the wily attorney had placed on her finger, she threw it from her, “ never was I so disgraced, and never will I be your wife ! There is a just Providence, who will protect the innocent.”

It was evident that the old woman believed Rawlinson’s story. She had seen Laura arrive, she had remarked the agitation of the girl, the anxiety of Blackburn to avoid detection, and his eager manner, when he dispatched his son ; the fainting fit at the discovery of the retreat, the imploring cry for mercy, all rose to confirm in her mind, the guilt of Laura.

“ I can forgive you even this time, Laura, for I love you tenderly, affectionately ; we must lose no longer time here, or the scandal will be abroad ; the carriage is ready, I leave you to dress, but mind, I will not delay.” As he

finished his sentence, he walked leisurely out, he turned to the old woman, and said, " Assist her but do not inquire into that which does not concern you ; whatever expense has been incurred, shall be more than repaid."

The door was closed ere Laura recovered from her astonishment. A thousand wild thoughts had rushed upon her ; she imagined that during her fainting, she might have been married, and ignorant of the extent of the law, she fancied herself torn for ever from Albert ; then memory recalled every word, until she had swooned away ; she saw that the marriage could not have been solemnized. Where was the priest, the book, the witness, for no one had entered the house ? Assuming as much courage as innocence could inspire, she rose and dressed herself, " I call upon you to remember this day, this hour," she said, " write it down, for one day you will be called upon to speak of it."

" Poor lady !" she answered, " how could you do so rash an act, and run away from so kind, so forgiving a husband ?"

Laura looked at her fully in the face, as she said, "Silence, and dare not insult me so much as to believe him, in preference to me."

Country people will talk ; their tongues are heaven's licences, although the devil may record their sayings. "I never knew, Miss," she laid a peculiar stress upon this word, "a man who was going to be hung, who did not say he was innocent, until the rope was round his neck, then it's too late, and he tells the truth ; I remember when mother Grant's daughter ran away with farmer Hodge's plough boy—"

"Silence ! I say, and respect my feelings if you cannot believe my innocence ! from this house I will not go, but by force ; that wretch, whom I scorn, shall never master me but by strength, and death itself shall be preferable to my being called his wife. Leave me, I say ! for since I cannot get my own sex to credit or assist me, I will trust in the truth of the proverb, that all tyrants are cowards, and I will maintain my virtue and my liberty, by the courage which ever attends innocence and modesty. Leave me."

“ No, no, Miss, I must not leave you, and I cannot if I would; this door is locked outside, those shutters are barred outside, and without the foot of the chimney sweep, heaven preserve the poor forlorn boys ! I or you must be content to remain until your husband’s return.”

“ Have I not told you he is not my husband, and do you still discredit me ?”

“ Your words would make me believe your story ; his authority, his boldness, his unreserve, make me, against my will, believe him. What can I do ? I’m very old, and am frightened ; for heaven’s sake, leave my house, although ’tis his for a month, he has paid for it.”

“ Old woman, if you are not a greater knave than fool, listen to one whose hair is, not grey with experience, but who has common sense for a guide ; if my husband had paid for this cottage for a month, I should have known of it. Is it likely I should have run away from one, to bring my lovers to another of his houses, eh ?”

“ Well, well,” sighed the old woman, “ they

say wisdom comes with age, and experience grows with observation; I must be a drone indeed, not to see this, for a woman of your age and beauty would surely know all the plans of an old and love smitten husband. I believe you, and yet if you say the truth, how came you here?"

"He employed that villain Blackburn to tear me away from Sir Ronald de Lancy's castle; he is the father-in-law to the Baronet."

The old woman held her long skinny fingers together, and said, "It's true, the world is coming to an end, the great and the low are vagabonds alike, and we shall be swallowed up by an earthquake."

"Nonsense, woman, is there no way of escape?"

"None whatever!"

"How far are we from Raven Castle?"

"Nine miles at least, and that not counting the half mile from the high road."

"Is there no cottage near?"

"Not within two miles, and that over a

hill, which is only passable by daylight; the path is so narrow, that goats hardly trust themselves in the dark."

"Good God, I shall die even of the exertion of my own heart; alone, friendless confined—how can I escape this wretch, this demon habited as a man?"

"Say what I can do, and I'll do it; though he kill me."

"Have you no signal, which in the event of fire, might bring neighbours to your assistance?"

"None but that the flame would make; and then its a weary way for them to tread; besides they might sleep, for they are all labourers, and retire early to bed, and then the cottage would burn to the ground. But heaven guard my old eyes from such a sight."

"Have you no one you could send to the high-road, there to wait until some one passed; fear not for a reward, my liberation shall ensure you an old age of independence."

"I have no one, no, not a soul; my only

girl returns to-night from her school ; she will go to my cottage, and how can I get there ?”

“ Let me try the door,” said Laura ; she tried it fearlessly, but it was fastened.

“ Who is that ?” said Rawlinson, as he unlocked the door, and entered the apartment. There was no answer, Laura stood before him undaunted, unshaken, her eye the meekest, the bluest, seemed lit up with unusual fire ; and it met the keen glance of the villanous attorney undismayed.

“ A tragedy queen !” said Rawlinson, as he advanced towards her, “ come, come, Madam, leave these heroics, and dwindle into the woman ; are you ready to leave this—directly ?”

“ Instantly, when the man appears with whom I can trust myself ; with you, I will never leave this cottage.”

“ Then I must use the power the law allows a husband ; I must take you by force, you are my wife, and you shall obey me.”

“ Surely, Sir,” said the old woman, “ you

would not use violence against such a slender girl as this."

"Away, you old fool, to your cottage; leave the room."

"Indeed I will do no such thing; here will I stay, and if my voice can make me heard, poor old Margey's throat shall be hoarse with bawling."

"Oh bawl away, old fool, until you are tired; come, I have no time to lose, come Laura," and he seized her by the hand.

"Never!" said the girl, as she resisted his endeavour to drag her by force, "Never, never! Mercy, mercy! help, help!"

It has a fearful sound upon the ear, that shrill shriek of an affrighted woman, and in the stillness of the night, it reaches as far as a trumpet sound. But Rawlinson knew the distance it had to travel, the solitude of the surrounding country, the perfect loneliness of the cottage, and he shrunk not from the purpose he was resolved to execute. Laura was but a child in his powerful arms; and after a few

ineffectual struggles, her strength gradually gave way, and she was carried almost unresistingly in his arms. He caught her up like a doll ; even the shriek had ceased, but as he reached towards the door, he found his purpose thwarted by the old woman ; who having locked the door inside, stood quietly before the threshold.

“Stand out of my way, you old hag of the devil ; or I’ll murder you on the spot.”

The old woman stood as immoveable as a statue.

“You seek the violence yourself ;” in an instant the fainting form of Laura was laid upon the bed ; the old woman was roughly seized, the key wrestled from her by force, herself hauled fearfully against the further wall, the door opened, and Laura once more in the arms of her hated adversary. This time there was no resistance, the poor girl lay motionless on his arms, the old woman was senseless in the corner, the desperate prize was gained ; already had he passed the room door, when a knocking

at the outward one arrested him in his progress, with the girl in his arms ; he opened it.

It was Blackburn, he had betrayed the place of refuge to Sir Ronald ; who, with Mr. Law, was in pursuit, and now sinking his treachery, he had returned quick as a horse's speed could convey him to insure the friendship of the very man he had betrayed ; he knew Rawlinson could creep out of any difficulty, and he always liked the imagination which framed the anecdote of having a friend in both places.

“What can be done, Blackburn ; could we not stand against these fellows, and boldly take the girl away ?”

“Impossible, they have more than four to assist them, the postilions would aid them, and so would the grooms, for you are hated by some, and scorned by others. Here there is no retreat, you must cross the foot of the hill to the right ; you must then continue along a narrow path, which will carry you many miles lower down towards the coast ; once there, you know the rest. The signals can be

answered as usual, and we may yet meet together again."

"And you, Blackburn, what will become of you?"

"Never mind me, leave the girl anywhere—escape, and let the carriage you have kept waiting at the very turning wait until the pursuers come." At that moment the cry of some people was heard in the distance. Rawlinson cast a look at the pale face of the girl, and with a speed quickened, in proportion to the danger, he followed the road which Blackburn had described. No sooner was he gone, and the old woman sufficiently recovered to attend to Laura, than Blackburn shouted to the pursuers, and pointed out the cottage, in which the girl was concealed. Sir Ronald was eager in the pursuit, but Law was young and nimble, comparatively speaking. He had arrived at the castle about two minutes after Blackburn's return; his course was instantaneously taken, the carriage was turned about, and money lavished upon the postilion, to urge their already fatigued horses to their

utmost speed. His was a perilous position, but he had extracted a promise of pardon from Law, and Laura had pledged her word, never to whisper against him; he would be king's evidence, vagabonds are ever ready to sacrifice their friends, when the tide turns against them; whilst it flows favourably, no one is more constant, more sincere; but one adversity, or one slip by which the other can rise over the prostrate body of his friend, and farewell friendship. Laura had recovered before the arrival of those who hastened to rescue her; and that moment was not lost by Blackburn, "For you," he said, I have sacrificed myself, my wife, my children, I must be taken to the goal, tried, condemned, whilst those around me perish from starvation; I have been the means of rescuing you—I throw myself at your mercy."

"I told you that if you brought me my friends, I would not testify against you. I promised you money, you have saved me, trust to me and my generosity, go instantly and guide Sir Ronald here, for the sooner he is

informed of his father-in-law's baseness, and the sooner I feel myself in security the better. Blackburn was about to speak, but Laura interrupted him, "go, my word is pledged, no harm shall happen to you."

It was not long before Sir Ronald and Mr. Law entered the apartment. Laura, unable to contain her feelings, which she had mastered beyond all conception, now became a woman; she leapt into the arms of Sir Ronald, and gave way to her feelings unchecked, uncontrolled. Law saw this but dimly, for his eyes were full, but his words were at command.

"Come, let us move from this, and quickly, we must return, but not to Raven Castle; for that man, Sir Ronald," pointing to Blackburn, "you are the best protector—I am the best for her."

"Oh let me go back and take one leave of Margaret; one last embrace; my dresses, my jewels are there."

"Just like a woman," said Law, "she talks of dresses and jewels as unconcernedly as a paid lawyer does of his client's case; you

must never enter that house again, at least as yet," he added cautiously, "the jewels are safe with Sir Ronald, the dresses are safe with Lady de Lancy."

"And yet, Mr. Law," said Sir Ronald, with great eagerness of manner, "I think if I could pass one hour with you alone, you would not repent the time. I have much to say, and to you I would unburthen myself. You have already proved yourself the friend of my brother, and of Laura. I can make you a more valuable friend to both."

"Then why did you not say so at first?" answered Mr. Law, "it's quite astonishing what words and time are saved, by coming to the point at once."

"Your consent, Mr. Law, to remain one night as my guest, lightens a heavy load here."

"I fancy I may prove a very unwelcome guest to Lady de Lancy."

"What relieves my mind, ought to relieve hers ; my determination is taken, it will save

much time, much expense, much uneasiness."

As the party left the cottage, and bestowed some welcome money upon the old woman, Laura took the arm of Mr. Law, and from the answer of the legal adviser, which sounded like, "I have, and before long, I expect to see him;" there was no doubt that a question, the nearest the heart, had been asked.

It was late when they had arrived; there was no Lady de Lancy to welcome them, she was in the sanctuary of her own chamber, and the doubtful manner she received Laura might have convinced one less warm in her friendship, and more tried in the world, that her appearance boded any thing but pleasure. Laura knelt by her, and hid her head in her lap, giving way to all the generous feelings of the young, and as yet uninjured heart; she grieved, in all sincerity, that her father had taken so rash a step, and even endeavoured to shelter his character, under the all-powerful influence of love. Each word struck deeper

and deeper into the heart of the faithless friend who was now foiled at every point ; she knew that Sir Ronald's conversation with Mr. Law would only be saved by her presence, and yet, the affected sorrow, for her father's rash act, almost forbade her intrusion ; but the moments were precious, the previous determination of Sir Ronald — his late moodiness — his sorrow—his sincere and boldly avowed repentance, made her dread the approach of that hour which now she thought had arrived ; it could be procrastinated by her presence, and forgetting even the kneeling girl, who felt for her friend more than for herself, she rushed from the room, and with the consummate coolness of the practised hypocrite, welcomed Mr. Law as he appeared in the drawing-room.

Laura, who feared to be left alone for a moment, soon swelled the number, and the evening promised to pass off, so that Margaret might see her husband, and instil into him some of her courage, some of her resolution.

That dawn of hope was soon overcast ; Sir

Ronald was reserved and silent, he sat near the fire-place, his head stooping forward, his whole mind perfectly absorbed ; when suddenly he rose, he called on Mr. Law to follow him, but Margaret's voice answered, and taking Mr. Law by the hand, she said, " Pardon me, Mr. Law, I have one word to say to Sir Ronald before you begin your conference."

In vain Sir Ronald looked a disapproval, Lady de Lancy advanced towards him, and taking his arm, she led him, rather than followed his footsteps into his library ; there she relinquished her hold. She turned the key in the door, and withdrew it from the lock, and advancing towards her husband, placed her finger on her lips, and sat by him.

CHAPTER V.

THE Spitfire was at sea, the fate of Carlos was known to her crew, and Snarling had taken the oath which the fear of death had forced from the murderer. The Franciscan friar had passed from the scaffold unquestioned; the law had taken its course without interruption and the presence of a priest of the Inquisition excited no particular attention; Carlos was supposed to have died in the right faith, and so far he was considered as a good and repentant Catholic, or the Inquisition might have deprived the eager populace of a sight which, to some, is as much regarded as a pleasure as a bull fight.

“ We must get out of the straits, Snarling, and strike across the Atlantic. We have no

chance here, the merchant ships of all countries, but our own, are few and the ports are dangerous to enter, the Isle of Pines is more fruitful to us, and our success has ever been the greatest among the islands in that vicinity; we might vary our cruize and go farther south, but I must see England again."

"And what would I give, Sir, to have another dance at Common Hard, to shake a flipper with an old messmate or shipmate, to drink another glass with a friend, or to do a bit of double shuffle and cut with my old girl! I'm afraid to say out loud what I could whisper; no man has grown old in our trade as yet, and strange as it is amongst us all, we never have had a deserter; that oath keeps us as close as a nipper does the messenger to a frigate's cable."

"We can talk over past days, Snarling, now in my cabin; the mate should ever know a part of the intentions of his Captain, and the officer should be a respectable distance from the men; we shall all miss Carlos; for if ever a man had the power of disguising his person,

that was the man ; besides his knowledge of Spanish was invaluable ; there is Juan, who must now and then act his part, but he cannot be trusted out of sight ; and here, Snarling, here we must remain until age and decrepitude force us to resign and live on that wretched island in a cave, with no soul to cheer us, no prospect of a return. I, too, who not willingly entered the service, who chose between life and death, and who never contemplated the sacred obligation until it was imposed upon me !—”

“ Aye, Sir, your’s was a hard case, and yet you have made much money.”

“ Of what use is it, Snarling ? I can live here, it is true ; but all the wealth of the world cannot buy my freedom ; besides I feel that the money is not honestly gained, we do it against the law.”

“ I don’t see that, Sir, we buy our letters of marque from all governments, and that gives us authority to take all vessels ; we are at war with all the world, and all the world with us ; besides, we never cut throats.”

“ Not now, thank God, and yet we may be forced to defend ourselves against an equal force, who then can say the result?”

“ There’s no harm in that ; I’ve heard many a man who was no conjuror, say that self-preservation was the first law of nature ; besides, I don’t see why we are not a little kingdom floating about with our own laws, our own authority for our own acts, and now we can put it in force, for there’s a vessel broad on the bow.”

“ I will not touch her here, Snarling, the sea is too narrow, vessels eternally pass, the sea is alive with men of war, and we might be caught in the act.”

“ She is edging down towards us, I think.”

“ Give me the glass,” said the Captain, “ she is a Smyrna, man,” he continued as he looked at the stranger, “ they always look like men of war, but her upper sails are not square enough ; she would make a glorious prize, but the danger is greater than the profit, for they always go armed against the Algerines, and we

should have what I would avoid, much noise before the capture."

The eyes of all the crew who laid along the deck, and only ventured to peep at the vessel were occasionally directed at the Captain; none dared gainsay his word, it was a law, and although every man fore and aft coveted the prize, none ventured to propose the capture. She passed close and evidently well prepared; the rakish look of the Spitfire had excited suspicions of her character, the tompions were out of her guns and her whole crew were on deck; no notice was taken of her, and as she skimmed past with all her studding sails set, her crew were seen to leave their quarters and retire below.

"That's a lucky fellow," said Snarling; "had we met him outside of the straits, he would have been soon converted into dollars; there he goes, little dreaming how near he was to the universal Shark of the Atlantic."

One or two smiled at the new name of the Spitfire, but the Captain looked at his mate

with a frown, as if to warn him that such remarks might lead to discontent.

The next day saw the Spitfire clear of the straits ; she shaped a course for the Western Islands and in about ten days from her passing Gibraltar, she made the Peak of Pico, she passed between the islands until she came to Corvo, off which, and near Flores she intended to cruize. Both the outward and homeward bound vessels which trade between England and America occasionally make these islands. It is a kind of half-way house which gladdens the eyes of the wearied traveller, inviting him to repose or assuring him of his right road.

It was not the first time that the Spitfire had called at Flores for stock ; here it is cheap and good, and from the island's highest point, the telescope could make out a vessel at least thirty miles distant. From that point there was nothing in sight, and the Captain returned to his vessel, resolved to stand out to sea and heave to, or keep the Spitfire under easy sail, always within sight of the islands ; accordingly

she left the unsafe anchorage of Flores and stood out to sea.

That night the Captain endeavoured to glean from Snarling all his previous history, to make him shake off the old sailor, and become more the officer, and he endeavoured to wean him a little from that affection to the bottle, which had never ceased since Tom first sung a song on the forecastle, or danced the seamen's horn-pipe in the waist, to the miserable scrape of a frigate's fiddler; he had deserted, shipped on board a vessel bound to Port au Prince, had been boarded by the pirate, when a less lenient Captain commanded and chose between death and piracy, the life of the latter. Snarling had entered the profession of pirate without much reluctance; for his opinion was, that die he must, therefore, the longer he put it off the better; he was sure of it, and therefore could well accommodate himself to his fate, without hastening his departure. He took to his new calling with much good temper, and always interfered to save the life of another; his good qualities were many, his bad few, his temper

excellent, his strength enormous, his mind uneducated, his manners unpolished; such was the Captain's associate. They had both talked over the oath, which bound them like galley slaves to the oar, and in spite of various hints given by both parties and also of conversations in which the pleasures of home were vividly pourtrayed, and all the charms of the quiet evening of life drawn, both separated without a word as to how this oath could be absolved, or how it was possible to liberate themselves from that they feared to break, and hated to uphold.

It was night, a light breeze blew from the westward—the Spitfire was under easy sail, keeping that vigilant look out, which those who fear a surprise ever keep; occasionally the night glass swept the horizon, and as the moon gave a greater light, the look out became more on the alert.

The crew had been long without the excitement of a prize, and the fate of Carlos, although merited, weighed heavily upon them. The life and soul of the Spitfire was dead, the most

desperate, and yet the gayest and almost the youngest was no more ; the character of the schooner had been betrayed, and there was a general feeling of insecurity amongst the crew ; one, who was sworn to an oath which he never had mentioned without trembling, had broken it. The news could be circulated through the world—the different names under which she had sailed—the secret repository of the counterfeit papers—her retreat at the Isle of Pines—her general haunts—her description, nay even the names of the crew—colour of each man's hair, and the expression of each man's countenance was noted ; well indeed might Snarling say, that all the world were anxious to see the Atlantic Shark.

It was the fear, hitherto unknown, that made the look outs more vigilant, and the report of a vessel on the lee bow, which was hastily announced, drew every man on deck ; whereas, formerly continued success had made them, in imagination, secure against discovery. Now there was no home but the Spitfire, and she had no safe anchorage even for a moment ;

henceforth, the anchor must be a stranger to the ground, and the land be the mark most to be feared; without indeed all their old haunts should be forsaken, and the Spitfire shift her cruising ground far to the southward of the equator.

The stranger was a brig, apparently a merchant vessel, but the Spitfire was not to be perilled upon an uncertainty—sail was made to keep clear of the land, and to be outside of the stranger at daybreak; whilst every motion was watched with a degree of alarm never experienced before. At dawn, her real character was established beyond a doubt—she was a merchant vessel making a run—she might be armed, but that was of small importance; the Spitfire was instantly in chase, and from her sailing (she never had yet found her equal,) was soon ranging up alongside. The brig hove to—she had no means of defence, and the number of her crew being ascertained, the Captain was ordered to come on board the Spitfire, whilst a boat from the schooner went on board the brig. In this boat was the Captain, he feared to

trust Snarling—his manner—his speech might betray him. As usual, all wore masks, and each man's figure was as much disguised as if he wore a domino.

On gaining her decks every man was ordered to come aft, and none obeyed the order without fear, and trembling. It was to them as they anticipated, their last moments; the younger part of the crew clung to the more hardy sailors, and he again, unaccustomed to face a foe of this description, whose face was disguised, exhibited an apprehension which would have been termed cowardice, if manifested against an open faced enemy.

It was now no longer the intention of the Captain of the Spitfire to take the cargo from the vessel, for he was afraid to trust himself to any anchorage, for such a time as would be requisite to land, and to sell it;—money—hard money, that which never betrays the owner, was his object, not a word was spoken. The crew of the brig were placed close aft, whilst the Captain made his observations below, attended by only one man. The bed places in the cabin

were closed; this at once struck the Captain of the Spitfire, as unusual and strange. He withdrew the shutters of one, a man was discovered gathered up into the smallest space, and covered with the bedding, he was entirely under all, and the strange appearance of the bed led to his discovery; the Captain pointed to him, and his man understood the signal; in a moment the concealed coward was lugged most unceremoniously from his lurking place, and fell upon deck without looking at his enemy; he was ordered on deck, and given in charge to one of the Spitfire's crew. The cabin was then rummaged—the holds were examined—some money, which was found in the secret places, handed into the boat, and all which could be taken without a probable discovery, was handed over to the Spitfire; but there remained one caution never omitted, to search the crew of the brig, and the Captain came on deck to be certain that no cruelty was practised; he was walking aft, when his eye suddenly fell upon the man whom he had found under the bedding; he was trembling with fear, and

watching the tall figure in authority, which was now moving towards him. It was now, he thought, the last moment of his life, and in the cowardice of his heart, for not a word had yet been spoken—not a violence committed—he fell on his knees and implored mercy.

It was odd to remark the various expressions on the prisoners' faces; some seemed to lift their inward prayers with the passenger who was imploring that, which it was unnecessary to ask, some who had wound up their courage to the sticking post, looked with an eye of ineffable contempt, and manifested by their resolute bearing, their determination to meet their fate unmoved, without asking the favour, even of their lives. The younger ones lifted their eyes towards the black immoveable countenance, and their hands clasped closer together as they listened to the words of him, who evidently could give the signal of death. The Captain stood close to the kneeling man, his arms were carelessly folded, but his eyes were fixed upon him; suddenly he seemed to awaken from his reverie and touching one

of his men, whispered into his ear ; the seaman ran forward, and in an instant was seen ascending the fore-rigging ; then rose an universal cry from all. It was imagined that the seaman had been sent aloft to reeve the yard rope, and that the death intended, was that of hanging. The younger men clasped his knees, and implored forgiveness ; some spoke hastily about a wife and children, whilst others in silence, watched the seaman with unmoved countenance.

The long black arms waved a desire to be silent, the sailor was at the fore-top-mast head, he was soon in the top-gallant yard, and after having swept the horizon with cautious glance, he looked towards his Captain, and made a signal that nothing was in sight ; he was beckoned down, the poor trembling passenger was ordered into the boat, but before he descended the side, he was blindfolded ; the Captain accompanied him, the crew long kept in suspense, were now liberated, and with a lightness of heart, which hope ever inspires, they leapt about the decks like madmen.

The Captain of the brig was ordered on board his own vessel—he was ordered to part company, and pursue his course, but the passenger was kept on board the schooner.

Glad enough to escape their very unwelcome visitors, few moments were lost on board the brig; the sails were filled, the large studding sail crowded, and the *Jane* of Liverpool was soon leaving behind her the object of the pirate's search; they hardly ventured to express their surprize at what had happened, until they saw the schooner still hove to, and as she grew less distinct, in size and shape, there was no alteration in her station.

“He's welcome enough to all he's got,” said the Captain to the mate; “he seemed to know more about that passenger than we did, for he has not taken a stiver which belonged to any one else, and I'm blessed if he has not even taken his clothes; I thought that man was a vagabond from his eyes, but how the devil that fellow, who was as black as a crow, should know him and his traps, is a mystery; all his money is gone with him,

and as he could not have got that lot honestly, why we are rid of a rogue, and he has paid his passage money.”

The prisoner was kept on deck abaft, under the care of the helmsman, who, although, the vessel was hove to, stood near his post; he was kept closely blind-folded, not a word could he hear, excepting now and then a jingle of words which he could not understand, spoken in a language strange to his ears, and from voices anything but familiar or pleasant. In the mean time, Snarling was receiving his instructions, which, being finished, the prisoner was taken below; opposite to him was seated Snarling, behind him carefully silent, was the Captain.

“Listen, you vagabond,” said Snarling, “and tell me the truth in answer to my questions, or by the pipes who played before Moses, your life is not worth a sick man’s allowance of grog; what is your name?”

“John Richardson.”

“Liar,” said Snarling, taking his hand, “do you wish to keep company with the sharks?”

have you no fear that the cat fish will nibble your toes off, or the sword fish touch you up with a pike as sharp as a marling-spike ; do you think, because your traps are marked J. R., your name must be Richardson ; speak again, and mind you, I don't come here to play the fool, or to be fooled. Did you ever see a wet hammock hung up to dry ? and how do you think you'd feel sewed up in one, shrouded in canvass, like a sailor outward bound ? speak !”

“ My name is John Rawlinson.”

“ I knew that, just as certainly as that seven bells was the time to mix the grog.”

“ Where do you live when you are at home ?”

“ In London.”

“ Oh you do—do you. On deck there, bring down the hot pincers. I'll take a pinch of your carcase every time you tell a lie. Now then, where do you live, when you're at home ?”

“ In Wales.”

“ You have told me two lies ; I’ll save you one or two more. You are an attorney, but you are no sea lawyer ; tell me the reason why you left your house to cross the seas to America, for you are not hand-cuffed, and therefore not so great a vagabond as the usual cargoes of live lumber ? You see, I know something about you, or I should not have done you the favour to invite you on board my vessel, whilst your own is going away with a fine wind to New York.”

“ Surely you would not kill me ; I am an innocent man ; take all I have, but spare my life.”

“ You greasy looking scoundrel,” said Snarling, in virtuous indignation ; “ do you think I’d waste my breath to stretch your neck ? Why if we hang an attorney, we should be haunted by lawyers for ever ; we have quite enough of you when alive. Now then, your history. Mind, I warn you, that if we tumble you overboard, and you cannot swim, so drown yourself, we are not answerable for your

death; take care, we have a nice difference between hanging or swimming."

Rawlinson, who was now aware of his destitution, for once in his life told the truth; during the recital of which, the Captain seemed almost in convulsions; but when the last part came of the surprize and recapture of Laura, the presence of Law, and the flight of the attorney to Liverpool, where he had embarked for America, a calmness and attention was observable.

"Amongst your traps, you woman-stealer, there is a jewel which I have seen before; you stole that?"

"My sister gave it me."

"Why you have papers enough in your chest to furnish the pastry-cooks of New York for a couple of years; what are they all about? No, there clap a stopper on your jaw tackles, for if you begin to tell us the history of these yarns, they'll last for ever, so I'll have them inspected by my secretary; in the mean time you may make use of every part of you but your eyes; if you tumble overboard, that's

your own work ; so away with you on deck, and mind, as sure as God made little apples, if you are detected squinting only out of those hawse holes of yours, your minutes will be shorter than my words.”

Now was Rawlinson in the power of the man, who had promised never to lose sight of him ; half the vindictive feelings which at first animated him, passed with the assurance of Laura’s safety ; and all the malice of disappointed love, which lasts in spite of years of excitement and employment, rose against Margaret, who was the cause, the secret engine, by which the abduction was worked. The jewel he had recognized ; the papers were spread out before him : his prisoner was removed forward, and the handkerchief taken off ; he was placed with his eyes towards the bulwark, and given clearly to understand, that the slightest variation of his optics would lead to unpleasant results ; the schooner wore and stood with her head in shore, whilst the Captain, whose heart beat quickly, as if aware that some discovery attended his researches,

desiring not to be disturbed, but in case of necessity, proceeded to peruse the documents, which his good and unexpected fortune had placed in his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE red tape was removed from a packet of papers, and the Captain was placed before them in a state of unusual excitement, his head rested on his hands, his elbows were advanced unusually far upon the table, his eyes devoured the contents, his frame shook with agitation. It was the original will of Sir Ronald de Lancy ; the artful scoundrel had practised a further fraud upon Sir Ronald ; not even the marriage of his daughter was sufficient to warrant his security ; he had copied the document, the original still remained. All the fair inheritance of his birth had been made over to his brother, a brother still, although in law, one who could not claim the right ; the paper which, before his departure from Raven Castle, he had found in the bible recurred to his mind, and he who

from circumstances the most untoward, had bound himself to a life which he abhorred, and which was merely upheld by the excitement, was by the will before him, not only a Baronet, but the possessor of Raven Castle. Bitter were the tears he shed ! For ever must the Castle and its dependencies be to him no place of refuge ; the oath, if man believed in a God, bound him for ever to the Spitfire ;—that oath was a written document to which, since his first appointment to the command, he had never read ; he feared to cast his eye upon it.

How was he now to act ? Here, amongst the papers, was the description of his desertion, letters which had passed between Rawlinson and Sir Ronald, an accurate account of Herbert's intended death, the examination of Blackburn, the list of sums to a vast extent remitted to the United States, the manner in which these sums were invested and the discovery of the whole life of Rawlinson from his first advice to his brother, to his embarkation on board the brig ; even his plan for the ab-

duction of Laura and its execution, with an account of the surprise and his suspicions that Blackburn had betrayed him. It appeared that his daughter, although informed of his intentions in some respects, was ignorant of the fortune her father had amassed; some parts of the journal in which he recorded his daily actions, with a fidelity strange for villainy, was worthy of the man; there was in it a mixture of folly, impudence sincerity, and caution.— Thus :

“ Monday the 13th January. Rose early; the vigilant man must ever be active; walked round the shrubbery and thought—thought that my new year should be as profitable as my last. Sir Ronald’s a fool; so is my daughter, for she believes *me*; she actually believes me such a fool as that I have spent my money and left the winter of age unprovided; and thus, through her I work upon Sir Ronald. When a man receives his interest from his fortune in the funds, he wishes life to grow shorter, for every day is an age until the next dividend becomes due;—I avoid that by a general steady increase. Have heard of Albert :

he will not escape me. I must drive him abroad, and then those at home will cease to remember him ; Solomon never said so true or so wise a thing as ‘ out of sight out of mind.’ Laura must be mine, if only to insure the jewels ; I care not for her, she is much too honest, too meek, mild and melancholy for me ; but Montezuma’s plume would sell well. Albert must be a brave man to leave the fashion of the trinket, and not fear discovery.”

There were days and days of such remarks, and the whole journal, will, account of money, and other papers of value were sealed up in a peculiar way, and directed only to be opened in the event of his death.

In his own will, which was likewise amongst the papers, there was one attempt at honesty : he had left his money to Albert to which he admitted it belonged, with a request that a church might be built where his house stood, in order that pious and good people might pray on the spot where he had concocted his villainies ; but he never mentioned the name of

Sir Ronald or his daughter in this *post mortem* act of justice and religion.

It was nearly midnight before Albert had read the papers. Rawlinson had been shown a hammock in the fore peak and given to understand, that any attempt to come on deck would be his first step towards a very long swim. With a resignation quite wonderful in such a villain, he quietly turned in, and in spite of his alarming situation, slept soundly.

There was no friend to whom Albert could pour out his own soul ; and there is no greater satisfaction than having a friend to whom a man can unburthen his mind ; he traced through the journal, the plots used for his discovery, his description as the deserter and many many ponderings upon the manner in which he had obtained the jewels. The conclusion of one day's remarks, was quite after his own best fashion, " Albert must be one of these things, —a pirate, a merchant or the devil."

What was to be done ? in vain Albert thought of returning ; his oath and his know-

ledge that the crew would soon manage to dispose of him, were obstacles he could not overcome. He had sworn to live or die with them, and there was no alternative; in the goodness of his heart, he forgave his brother; he wrote a letter which the first opportunity was to convey, in which he mentioned that chance had placed the papers of Rawlinson in his hands, that he had become acquainted with the former circumstances of Sir Ronald's life, and that, in forgiving him, he left him the undisturbed possession of Raven Castle with the title, rather than that the exposure should take place and the bright name of his father be tarnished by the deeds of the son. But how to dispose of his prisoner? if he landed him at Corvo or Flores, he might get to Terceira and thence home without much difficulty. He might evade the law, he might manage to hush up the abduction, which for the sake of Laura might be consented to, even by her adviser; to brand him with the villainy and to leave such a wretch to rot in some desert place, once occurred to him, but where was there

such a place ? besides, he wished to avoid being identified by such a scoundrel ; he paced the deck half the middle watch. He gave no orders, he appeared far from vigilant as usual, and his whole mind seemed absorbed in some great undertaking ; at last his mind was made up ; he ordered the mate to make sail and to stand to the E. N. E. under as much sail as the schooner would bear.

There was no murmur against this order, although the crew had that evening talked of the long wished for return to the Isle of Pines, another visit to Medellin during the fête, or a probable satisfactory visit to Tampico de las Tamulipas, where occasionally recruals of mules, laden with the produce of the mines, arrived. To the crew, the resource of that rich country was well known, and that to ship the treasure to Spain, the money often came to ports of considerable insignificance ; but the word of the Captain was a law against which they never dared to revolt ; he had conducted them in safety through scenes of great difficulty, and where courage and coolness alone

rendered success probable; in the last days of Carlos he had ventured his life even on the same scaffold, and was prepared to have rescued him, had not the crew pronounced his doom; they saw in their Captain a man ever ready to do good, but slow to do that which was cruel; he liberated all prisoners and often, as the stripped wretches returned from their unseen plunderers, the hand of the man who ordered the plunder conveyed some assistance to his victims. He was the child of circumstances, placed in a situation against his will, and acting against the dictates of his own heart.

At dawn of day, another vessel was seen: she was evidently bound to America, and was a merchant vessel; the Spitfire bore down upon her, the long gun signaled her to heave to, and the men in the masks boarded her; they took with them Rawlinson, who received from the Captain, at his parting, a bag of money, in which there was also a note, written in a disguised hand. All his papers were carefully preserved, his clothes, with other articles of minor value, were restored to him, and the

Captain of the stranger was ordered to receive him on board, and to land him at the port to which his ship was destined ; no outrage of any kind was committed, time appeared of more consequence than plunder ; and the out-lawed attorney was suffered to proceed to the place, for which he had embarked in another vessel, unhurt in person, and not much poorer in pocket ; he had only seen one face, and that was the face of a Spaniard, as brown as an olive, and as desperate as a ruffian.

The Spitfire, on leaving the stranger, stood on her course, whilst the brig, equally anxious to part company with her very suspicious neighbour, crowded all sail towards America. Several other vessels were seen, but none were boarded ; the third day, a large frigate was espied to leeward, she was evidently the look out frigate of some squadron, for signals were seen flying ; when first observed, she was under her three topsails jib and spanker, and she was discovered by the Spitfire at least an hour before they saw the schooner. The eye of the man on the top-sail-yard of the

schooner was never off the frigate ; the glass was not for a second idle, and it was one P. M when a voice declared that the strange frigate to leeward had set her courses, and top-gallant sails, and had hauled dead upon a wind in chase; the Spitfire was running parallel with her. Before this occurred, the one had been standing to the eastward, and the other to westward ; now both hauled on a wind, the Spitfire laying about N.W. by W. and the frigate about E. by N. As the Spitfire had been chased a thousand times, and a thousand times escaped, not one of the crew ever supposed her possible to be overhauled, without some very untoward circumstances occurred, and then the talent of the Captain generally extricated her ; they, therefore, having trimmed the sail to the nicest point, and witnessed her rapidity of sailing, sat down as quietly, as if no vessel was near her ; indeed the great distance of the frigate, her top sails being scarcely above the horizon, and that dead to leeward, rendered the idea of a chase, considering the long nights, perfectly despicable. The Captain betook him-

self to a reperusal of his father's will ; some of the crew sung songs, others smoked ; whilst others again counted their money, and wondered when a cruize on shore would lighten them of the easily acquired wealth.

At two o'clock, the Spitfire was abreast of the frigate, and she was observed to tack, and now the trial of sailing would soon be ascertained ; by way of seeing how much the Spitfire would forereach over her, bearings were accurately taken ; but no more sail was set, the schooner was under her fore and aft sails ; with a reefed top-sails, she could have carried more, but she was never pressed with her canvass ; the frigate appeared under single reefed top-sails, top-gallant-sails, jib and spanker.

This trifling circumstance of the tacking of the frigate, gave rise to many an anecdote of the speed of the Spitfire, and it was remarked by Snarling, that the vessel herself seemed conscious of being pursued, for she invariably sailed faster the more she was pressed in pursuit ; she was in truth a gallant vessel ; her equal had never been found ; she had been

chased more than forty times in two years, and she never had once been obliged to carry all possible sail; as the schooner was only going one point from her course, the Captain considered her, as making the best of her passage, and quieted all his thoughts, disagreeable as they occasionally were, that although the Spitfire was chased, she was making her course good.

The wind remained very steady indeed: it neither increased, nor decreased; some clouds seemed thickening to windward, and the mares' tails, and mackarel scales, also indicated the probable increase of the breeze when the sun went down. So secure had the crew of the Spitfire become in the unrivalled excellence of her sailing, that it was close upon sunset before Snarling was seen at the compass taking the bearings of the frigate.

"I think," said the man at the wheel, "that she has the wind a little more to the eastward, than we have, for I think I see her plainer than I did." The glass was immediately in the hands of the Captain, who, hearing the conversation, came on deck.

“ She has neared us a good deal, Snarling,” he said, as he took his eyes from the glass; “ I see below the reef points of his second reef; and when I left the deck, even with the rise of the sea, I could not see below the first.”

“ And she’s forereached upon us, more than two points,” said Snarling. “ I’m blessed if she must not be the flying Hœbe at last; there’s no other craft that ever came from a dock-yard, either in France or England, who could hold a candle to us, but that frigate.”

There was some little anxiety displayed by the Captain, as his mate told this very unpleasant truth; every sailor had heard of the flying Hœbe; she might have gone in chase of the flying Dutchman, and perhaps have captured her. To meet with her, was any thing but pleasant; but the nights were long, and in all probability she would be recalled.

As the Captain pondered over this, the answering pendant was seen at the mast head of the frigate, and shortly afterwards a signal that Albert faithfully remembered. He made out the flags distinctly, “ the chase is an enemy!” it appeared from the length of time

the signal was flying, that the ship, to which she was signalizing, was further off than the Spitfire; at last it was hauled down, and the answering pendant was seen responding to a telegraph; for it was dropped and hoisted about a dozen times.

“ She has leave to chase,” said Albert; “ how many are we going ?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE Spitfire was going eight knots an hour, and she was hugging the wind, yet it was evident, to the most careless observer, that the frigate had not only weathered, but forereached; the hull was visible from the top-sail-yard, but the evening had begun to close in, and at that distance, the paint could not be distinguished.

When the Spitfire lost sight of her, she shook a reef out of her top-sail, and tacked. The weather looked lowering to windward, and a squally night was anticipated; a slight alteration was made in the trim, and when the log was hove, the vessel being one point free, she was going eleven knots. She was now standing away from her destination, and those gloomy

forebodings which sometimes give warning of coming misfortunes, seemed to have settled on the crew.

It had ever been the cautious practice of the Captain to avoid any man of war; he preferred the risk of a chase to the risk of some of the crew recalling his features; but for that, he might have borne down on the frigate, and dared an investigation; his English letter of marque would have saved him, and his well tutored crew would have defied all cross examination; but the guilty are ever timid. Prevention says, a doctor is better than cure; escape, said the pirate, is better than search. "We can but be overhauled, at last," said Snarling, "but it won't be to-morrow, or the Captain of that infernal craft must see through a cloud as clearly as if it was daylight."

Not a light was shown from the Spitfire, the watch were on the alert, and the most vigilant look-out kept;—the fate of Carlos was ever on their lips, and the long ceremony of his execution, with all the horrors of a crowd of people to witness the last writhings of a condemned

criminal; the hiss of hatred the scowl of scorn, as one, the enemy of all, was legally murdered, gave a cold creeping of the flesh, which no exertion could warm.

The Spitfire's appearance was always against her; it was imposible to pass unnoticed the huge sails which seemed disproportionate to the low hull; her canvass appeared to bury her by its power, yet no vessel half so lightly skimmed over the seas, or cut more silently through the water.

The crowded sail was soon too much for the increasing wind; but still there was a reluctance to reduce it; the vessel seemed flying for its existence, and the smallest diminution of canvass was never anticipated by the Captain.

“Well,” said Snarling, as he looked to windward, and caught a spray on his rough cheek, “this won't do; if we don't shorten sail ourselves, yonder squall, which is coming along like a tornado, will soon save us the trouble of going aloft, by leaving the top-sail yard on deck; why I never knew the craft to stagger before; she trembles like a chap with the ague,

or a man going to be exe——”when he stopped the utterance of the word with a whistle.

“We can hold on, Snarling,” said the Captain, “through it. I don’t think it’s a very stiff one.”

“Stiff enough to take the starch out of the finest top-sail that ever came out of Portsmouth yard, Sir ; why it’s as black as an undertaker, and one can almost hear it whistling a merry note at the mischief it was about to commit.”

“Stand by the top-sail halyard, forward ; get that weather brace well in, Snarling, and let some hands stand by, to clew the yard down ; mind your weather helm, my lad, the squall seems drawing forward ; if, after this, the breeze does not slacken, we must shift the jib, and reef all the sails.”

“Better do it at once, Sir,” said Snarling, “the night gets worse and worse, and if ever there was a breeze painted aloft, it was in the sky before sun set, and in that bur round the moon, which was large enough for an over shot

wheel, for the water mill of the world ; my eyes and limbs, here it comes."

The wind came howling along, and the word to shorten sail was given ; it was partially too late ; the top-sail was split, and the top-mast sprung, and work enough was cut for the crew, for at least an hour.

" I thought so," said Snarling, " the more haste the worst speed ; if we had not been so cursedly afraid of that frigate, which I suppose, about this time is sixty miles off, we should not have had to swallow as much rain as would mix the grog for a crew of a seventy-four."

" Don't be grumbling there," said the Captain, rather sharply, " but look about you, shift the top-mast, get a reef down in the main sail, and make her snug for the night ; it will blow a gale before morning."

" I always like grumbling, when I work," said Snarling, as he lent his best hand to repair the mischief. There were plenty of hands, and all good and desperate seamen to obey the

orders. Reefs were taken in all the sails ; the jib shifted for a fourth jib, and by midnight, the Spitfire was surging through the sea, at the rate of twelve knots an hour ; they passed two vessels and saw the light of an admiral's ship ; but the night was so dark that the schooner was unobserved.

“ Aye,” said Snarling, as he kept his eye on the admiral's light, “ there's the regular old channel groper ; three top-sails, a mizen and fore-top-mast stay-sail ; there they go, as much in line as a flight of wild geese ; all hands fast asleep and not a bad prize for some of them close along side ; keep that light in the binnacle you, Juan, concealed ; one at the time is plenty to chase us ; we are safe enough now, for the frigate will take a cruize to herself, and won't come back to this rendezvous for a week, or two.”

“ When we are well passed these ships, Snarling,” said the Captain, “ bear right up, keep her about south, and carry as much sail as you can.”

“ Aye, aye, Sir,” answered Snarling, “ that's

just the way to double them all ; before daylight we shall be *fifty* miles to leeward, and if the frigate has played Tom Cox's traverse, and tumbles upon us at daylight, it's not the little Spitfire which he'll take without a long run."

Long before daylight the anxiety of the crew manifested itself ; it was the first time they had ever found their rival at sailing, and they knew that their suspicious movements would entail upon them a search which, with all their ingenuity, they could but ill bear. As the first streak of grey was discernable, the glasses were in use ; the only man in the whole crew who seemed quite indifferent to the observation being Snarling ; he declared the schooner had been badly steered, and that, as for any frigate ever built, beating the Spitfire, was just as unlikely as the Lord Mayor of London commanding the channel fleet. Gradually the revolving world turned towards the sun, and the daylight grew distinct ; not a sail was in sight ; the glass had been directed carefully to every part of the horizon ; there was not a speck ; and Snarling, as he went down below for the

first time since eight o'clock the preceding night, rubbed his hands as he said, "More frightened than hurt, and I think if we are so cursedly afraid of our throats, we had better wreck the craft on the Isle of Pines, and each man set up his own establishment."

A beam of joy lightened the face of the Captain. It was attributed to the absence of the frigate, but far other thoughts occupied his mind; he now altered his course to W. N. W. hauling up close upon a wind. The only words which fell from his lips, after his order was given, being, "I should not like it to happen until one vessel was found which could beat us."

The breeze increased as the sun rose, which it did, red and fiery; there was no occasion to run the hazard of a sprung lower mast, sail was reduced; and at noon this terror of the seas was tossed about, to use Snarling's expression like a boy in a blanket. The wind grew louder and stronger; the close reefed fore and aft-fore-sail, triced up high enough to allow a sea to pass under it, all the sail was set, and if

ever the figurative expression of riding like a duck upon the water, was applicable to any vessel, that vessel was the Spitfire. Small as she was, comparatively speaking, with ships of the line, her decks were as dry ; the long sneaking vessel met the coming sea ; rose easily on its summit, and then sank slowly in the abyss. Even when the toppling sea came hurriedly along, its crest bursting with the foam, which the wind conveyed like a shower of rain, the gallant schooner faced it steadily ; and allowing it to burst upon her chest tree, distributed its gifts to all equally.

There was no day long enough for the Captain, the perusal of Rawlinson's journal, which for years had marked the misery of the man, who, in a tone of levity, had recorded his day's operations, struck him at every line. Here was discovered the plot to find out and dispatch Herbert ; the object of the visit to the cottage where Albert had met his enemy as a deserter ; the whole plan by which Laura was to have been captured, and the narrow escape

of the Captain at the ball. Here was written, by the hand of his greatest enemy, the probable result of his capture; either death as a deserter; or transportation for a felony, if not the gallows for a high-way robbery; every word was recorded, the time was punctually marked, success sure, disgrace inevitable had he been captured. No bitter thought envenomed the last action of Albert; he had covered his enemy with generosity, he had not allowed him to be plundered; and he had set him forward in his cruise to a land of security, with only a hint, that on that misnamed land of liberty, he might, by repentance, work out forgiveness from Him, who is the father of all, which the laws of civilized community, never could have extended to such a sinner.

These papers and packets, the most valuable of all prizes which ever had fallen into his hands, were carefully directed to Mr. Law, with instructions not to proceed in any suit, until further directions from Albert, or to be opened but by his order; with this parcel, was a letter to Laura, congratulating her on her escape; and praying her to have further confi-

dence in one, the object of whose life, was once more to throw himself at her feet.

His days passed merrily ; those well employed find time for every thing ; are ever cheerful, and have ever a moment to spare for the conversation of a friend ; the idle and the frivolous have never one second to spare, and consume a day in great excitement, endeavouring to kill time, the most inveterate and most constant of all their enemies.

The crew below had no task to perform on deck ; they sat down, and mended their clothes ; some more greedy than the rest counted their dollars ; but generally speaking, the crew like all gamblers were ever generous, and thought little of the hereafter.

At sunset, there was no chance of an alteration of the weather ; the crew long accustomed to some occupation, began to talk over past events, and this hugging the English coast, which was evidently the Captain's intention was commented upon with much acrimony ; in short, opinions were circulated, which, had not the oath been remembered, might have led to unpleasant consequences.

“ Let’s have a bottle of grog, a cigar, and a song,” said Snarling ; “ we must tune up another pipe, now Carlos is gone ; and if none of you will start an end, I’m just the one as will set the example.”

The very proposition turned the tide of discord. What sailor can be cast down, when grog is proposed, or a stave volunteered ? all seemed in an instant prepared to join in the fun, while Snarling, who was only acting in accordance with his Captain’s wishes, soon found a subject to amuse his audience.

Although smoking was not generally allowed between decks, yet as the wind was high, the weather cold and chilly, with occasional showers of rain, the crew huddled together, the cigars were lighted, the grog mixed, and swung to avoid its capsizing ; and Snarling, by way of setting an example, turned up his pipe, and sung—

There’s a vessel which swims on the seas,
She belongs to all parts of the world !
She is found in the Mexican breeze,
On the sea which the Tiffoon has curled.

Every craft which she meets is her prize ;
But she deals not in blood or in slaughter,
Though her deeds may be seen from the skies,
The records are popped under water.
She's at war, though she's never in strife,
For she pounces at once on her prey,
And hers is the conjuror's life,
Which varies with each coming day.
Success to the Spitfire—the craft !
Which chased, yet no vessel had caught her ;
From her stem, to the transom abaft,
She's the beauty, and pride of the water.

“ Well, I never thought to see the craft,” said Juan, as Snarling finished, “ which could gain upon us in a breeze, when we could carry the top-sail, and be in smooth water ; there was not sea enough to give a duck a head ache ; yet I'm blessed if that frigate did not creep up to us, as if we had been at anchor.”

“ She was built in France,” said another, “ and that accounts for her sailing so well ; those Frenchmen have the nimblest legs in the world.”

“ Aye,” said Snarling, “ to run away with ; but they are never so quick to chase ; it was an English frigate, and that was the fleet to which she belonged, that we crossed last night. It’s the only ship in the world we need fear, it’s the flying Høbe.”

“ I should like to know,” said another, “ why we did not take the cargo out of that craft the other day, and why that red-headed rascal was given his money back ? Our other Captain used to tell all about where we were going, and what was done ; but this man keeps rummaging some old papers, and when he gets half across the Atlantic, turns tail, and runs us smack into the jaws of the channel fleet.”

“ It was a good night’s work though, which made him our Captain ; and I dare say Carlos told him of it, before the screw choked his luff ; and if he had not have taken the oath, he would have left his head behind him ; near Puerto Cavallo.”

“ He is the best man we ever had, or could

have,” replied Snarling ; “ for my part, I never liked that slaughtering innocent people, and robbing churches.”

“ Why you set us going at Falmouth.”

“ Not I ! It was Carlos, who swore he was doing his religion a service by plundering ours.”

“ Well, that’s all right,” said Juan, “ all the heretic parsons ought to be burnt ; but I think we are not the best people to quarrel about religion, although those who have the least, generally roar the loudest about it. Who’ll tell us the yarn about the Captain, how he came here, and who he is, and what’s his real name ?”

“ Aye,” said Snarling, “ he’s a clever fellow who can answer all these questions. I can tell how he came here, and I can tell you some of his names, for he has as many as would fill the open list of a seventy-four ; but which is the right, out of all these pursers’ names I can’t tell any more than the figure head.”

“ Well then,” said Juan, “ just tell us how he came here ?”

“ This is all about it,” continued Snarling ;

“it was at that business, as Puerto Cavallo, when Carlos got the girl aboard in boy’s clothes, and we went on shore at night to the church; that was the same girl, who he murdered at Cadiz. It was after we had exchanged some property with those men who left their money on the tables without counting it, that our Captain, who was the very devil at opening houses, went to the house of the father of the girl; he had pledged himself not to plunder him, but no sooner did he see some money than he began to place it in his pocket; the girl called on Carlos to protect her father; high words arose and a row ensued, in the midst of which, our present Captain, dressed as an English sailor, appeared just as Carlos, to save the father of the girl, stabbed the Captain, A riot ensued; the girl, on seeing the blood, rushed into the street, and called for assistance. Women always bawl out, or faint directly the danger’s over; they never do it at the time, and the guard seeing how the cat was jumping came down with muskets and baggonets, and pikes and points enough in all shapes, to have

set up so many hemp cleaners' shackles. Somehow, this young shaver saw the danger better than any of us ; we were all for retreating into the house, and making good our defence there, but he called out that if we did we should be hemmed in until more men came to the assistance of the soldiers, and that then, we must either surrender, or make good our retreat through the same street, that it was then requisite to pass. ' Here,' said he, as he took hold of four of us, Carlos was one, ' do you kick up a bit of a row here, whilst we retire to the next corner, and then make a retreat when you hear us shout, fire,' this was done all as orderly as the marines at exercise. The Spanish guard on hearing us blaze away—we had only pistols—retreated a little and then our lads rejoined us, as we, having accomplished our object, fell back towards the boats, taking advantage of the moment of surprise we had occasioned. They soon recovered their courage, and on they came like mad lions making as much row as the present squall ; but we had got close to the boats, and were on the open

beach ; ‘There my lads,’ said he, ‘I recollect it well—jump in, and be off, never mind me, I shall be shot, but I prefer it.’ Carlos and myself caught hold of him, and in spite of his exertions to be clear of us, we placed him in the boat ; the Spaniards seeing us afloat began to fire, and as we were close together, the balls came in rather too thick, and fast to please us ; the Captain made us separate, told us not to fire, but to get out to sea, and somehow every man obeyed him as naturally as if he had been sworn in.

“ When he got on board the craft, and saw what she was, he begged most politely to be sent on shore. That would never do, for he saw us all—knew us all, and he might have held up his hand against us in any court. It was hard to force a man who had served us, to jump over board, where sharks are just as plentiful as potatoes in Ireland ; so we said he should join us. He swore nothing on earth should ever make him belong to the Spitfire, and we were obliged to give him a chance,

either to be handed over to Davy Jones's locker blindfolded, or be Captain of us.

“It was a toss up which he took; he did not care about death any more than an Indian prisoner; but when we came to place the black handkerchief over his eyes, and Carlos told him that he might say adios to all the women in the world, he gave a kind of hiccup, and a sigh, muttered something like a lawyer, which some said was Laura, and consented to remain, if he was Captain.”

“‘Then,’ said Carlos, ‘you will take the oath?’”

“‘Anything,’ he answered, in a kind of despair, like a man with a tooth ache.

“‘Then kneel down,’ said Carlos; ‘now swear upon this cross,’ and he gave him the handle of a sword, ‘that to-morrow you will take the oath, we shall direct you to take.’”

“‘Of what nature is it?’ said he.

“‘Of that nature,’ Carlos whispered in his ear, ‘that may give you an opportunity of seeing her again, whilst without it, the black

handkerchief, and the shark will be nearer you than at present.'

" ' I swear,' he said, " though heaven is my witness, how much against me it is to do so.'

" He's mighty squeamish thought I, about his oath, and the command of the finest craft afloat."

" Excepting that frigate yesterday," interrupted Juan.

" Excepting, you hold your tongue," said Snarling, " I won't tell you the rest of the yarn."

" Spin away mate, and don't be angry."

" Well, the next day came, and we all mustered in clean rigging, armed with cutlasses and bare headed, as he came up the hatchway. We all drew our weapons, knelt down and held the points to our hearts; we then swore the oath, to be true to him, never to murmur against his orders, to assist him against any, with our lives, who dared dispute his command; to live, to die with him, and as long as the

Spitfire floated, to be his slaves—his subjects.”

“ I never took that oath,” said Juan.

“ You were a boy, when we caught you, but in a month you will be sworn ; we all know from experience, that with us there must be but one captain, one king. We then, every one of us, drew some blood with the point of the sword, and as he took a taste of us, we bowed our heads to the deck, and he placed his foot on the neck of each of us.

“ It was then his turn.—Lord love you, that man who is as cool as the snow on the Mexican mountain of Orizava, became just as white, and just as cold as it ; whilst the next moment, the large drops of perspiration ran down him, as if a man had watered his head with a watering pot. He could not speak for some time, so we gave him some wine to wash the blood down, and Carlos, holding the glass, bade him wound himself, so that we might unite ourselves to him by the bond of blood. It was not fear which made him hesitate to tap

his arm ; not fear of the pain, but it was something which warned him of the solemnity of the affair. The large crucifix was before his eyes ; those who had sworn to obey him, were around him, and he saw from the manner we expressed ourselves, that he would have to bind himself, until death, unto us, and to the Spitfire ; but his imagination, heightened as it was, never could contemplate the oath, about to be administered ; at last with a desperate stab, as if he could not feel bodily pain, he plunged the sharp point of a dirk into his arm, and the blood flowed copiously. Carlos made him say ‘ As I bound myself to you with blood, so bind yourselves to me ; this blood is now yours, as yours is mine ; from this moment we are one in cause, one in heart, one in blood ; you are my relations by that tie, and none others have I but you, until death shall part us.’

“ We all again knelt down, and each man drank a drop of the blood, each man made the sign of the cross, and each man repeated aloud

the words—the same words which the Captain had said. It seemed a weight off the Captain's mind, as he thought the ceremony was concluded, and his heart seemed to beat quicker, when he was told to kneel down, and hold the small silver crucifix which is always put upon any dead man before we bury him; the parchment was placed in his hand, and he read aloud the oath, which binds him for ever to us."

"What is it?" said Juan.

"That which I would not repeat in this gale of wind; not whilst this storm rages, and that power which is invoked manifests itself in it; but the oath was such, that he trembled like an infant, as he pledged his soul to his obedience to it; there was no power left unimplored to shower down damnation on his heart, if he swerved from it; he is ours, as we are his;—the tie cannot be dissolved, until not a plank remains of the Spitfire; not a man breathes who is now in her! The shores of all nations become the places of our recreation,

as of our crimes. The power invested in Morgan of old, is invested in our Captain; the names of the great buccaneers, such as Francis Lolonois, Pierre le Grand, Morgan, Sawkins, Sharp, Watling and Lawrence de Graff, and others, are by us looked upon as a former race of kings; to whose sovereignty our Captain has succeeded; and never yet, excepting in the case of Sharp and Watling, has any Captain been cashiered. The breaking of our king is as culpable an act, as the regicide who has broken his oath of allegiance; and each man would rise to kill the mutineer, who dared hatch treason against his commander. Think of that, Juan, and you know the substance of the oath. The whole world may melt away, but as long as the Spitfire lasts, we are one crew, under one Captain; and now, my lads, hurrah for the hammocks! and never mind which way we steer, for the world is our plaything, and our profit; we shall soon return to our cavern in the Isle of Pines, and there we shall see those who have served like us,

in a good old age, surrounded by luxuries, and enjoying as much pleasure as their silvered heads could desire.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Not very differently had the Captain passed his time ; he was in the solitude of his own cabin ; the wind howled and roared, the creaking vessel rolled over the high seas, the foam of the wave flew harmlessly over the schooner, as she reeled and lurched in the gale. The useless helm was lashed half a turn a lee, whilst the fore and aft-fore-sail, nearly splitting with the violence of the wind, kept the Spitfire from falling too far to leeward.

With his legs twisted round those of his table, which was lashed to the deck, and by the aid of a lamp, which swung to and fro with increased violence as the schooner met the sea, the Captain read again the will of his

father ; he knew it by heart, and yet there was a pleasure in seeing the signature of his parent. The kindness which manifested itself throughout, the tender regard for his wife's honour, the justice of the parent ! in replacing it, he saw the oath which bound him for ever to the lawless life he had pursued, and must continue to pursue ; he took this fatal document, and supporting his burning forehead in his hands, he again perused it ; he had never dared to touch it ; but now the very elements tempted him to look ; the night was such that the foulest imagination might conjure up as the dark hour for framing such a document. The lightning's flash as it burst superior to the lamp's flickering flame, rejoiced, more than alarmed the Captain whilst the long roll of the nearing thunder, seemed music to his mind.

He paused at one sentence. " I swear by all above in heaven, and all registered in hell, by the storm, by the wind, the thunder's thunder, and the lightning's flash, never to leave her as long as a plank remains to float upon, not whilst one of the crew survive in

the battle, as long as she floats I am her Captain, the chosen chief, which no subterfuge can evade, no law annul; from this day to the day of my death, I am the brother of every man amongst you; and so may those elements, and those powers crush me with eternal torments, cursing me with all horrible diseases whilst living, wasting away in the leprosy of contamination, until an everlasting hell receives me—if I in this forfeit my word, or evade the act.”

There was another clause which bound him to do his utmost to preserve the vessel under every circumstance, and those bound to the Spitfire. The chain of servitude was clogged to his leg; it was useless repining; he read and re-read the several sentences, but each was dependant upon the other, and where, apparently the quick eye of hope detected a flaw, the next paragraph crushed that hope, and rendered all evasion impossible.

Even at this moment the gathering clouds to windward, and the bright gleam of the forked lightning warned him of his oath; there

were precautions to be taken against the wind and the lightning; and the Captain, having uttered a hasty prayer for forgiveness, went on deck.

To windward all was dark and dreary; the moon, which occasionally for a second was seen, as the skud blew from its face the dark veil of clouds which enveloped it, was surrounded by the ominous ring; whilst the lightning to windward, came rapidly on, as the thunder clouds were rolled to leeward.

He gave his orders coolly and collectedly, and then retiring to the weather-quarter, he watched the flashes, and counted the seconds which elapsed before the roll of the thunder began, thus estimating the distance. It was but a mile to windward, and in less than a minute, the cloud might burst over them, and had not Laura's figure skimmed over his recollections of the past — for her remembrance caused all his crime—he would have implored the lightning to burst upon the schooner, and by its tremendous power absolve the oath, and leave the crew to struggle for existence.

The idea had scarcely passed, when a flash broke close alongside it ; fell about a foot to windward, whilst the next struck the fore-top-mast, split it from its head to his heel, wounded the head of the fore-mast, and passed apparently, through the vessel ; the shock and the glare startled those below, one of whom, gave the alarm of fire so palpably visible was the spark, whilst the voice of the Captain, summoning his crew, followed the roar of the thunder, which seemed actually on board of the schooner. The peak halyards gave way, and the gaff came down, as quick as thought a small storm try-sail was shown abaft, and the Spitfire's head kept up to the sea. All was confusion forward, the top-mast soon fell, and carried with it the head of the wounded fore-mast ; the bowsprit was unsupported, but it remained firm, whilst the fore-mast stood, although unsupported by a single rope.

Every man on board the Spitfire had been nursed in the lap of danger ; there was no murmur at the untoward event ; the wreck was

cleared away, the lower and top-sail-yard, with the sail of the latter preserved, and the fore-cap luckily saved; yet there stood the solitary spar, broken off about four feet below the cap. Each sea was now looked at with horror; the vessel was unmanageable as to escape, and would become liable to be overhauled by any of the numerous cruizers, which, at that time, swarmed on the seas. There was no occasion, as in other vessels, to cheer the crew on to exertion—their lives were on the event, and each man being an able seaman, knew without the continued instructions, what was required. By two o'clock all was snug; but, although every man had attempted to swarm up the naked spar, not one had succeeded. The seas rolled heavily, and the Spitfire, deprived of the sail under which a schooner should always be hove to, laboured more than was usual.

No one had been more active than Snarling; three times he had succeeded in getting a few feet above the deck, but each time he had been obliged to slacken his hold, he gave it

up at last, fairly exhausted, although as he laid on his back, he kept his eye on the spar, and vowed to save it yet.

Not less anxious was the Captain, and equally emulous of Snarling were all the crew ; their general safety was in their speed ; thus unexpectedly arrested, the vessel rolled heavily and at each pitch every eye was directed aloft ; still the foremast stood and still the gale increased.

It was a moment of intense anxiety when the morning clouds rolled away and daylight became perceptible ; far as the eye could reach, no vessel appeared to alarm them. Fatigued as they were, they never relaxed in their exertions, sheers were erected in a manner which the dexterity of practised seamen alone can accomplish, large cleats were nailed to the foremast head, the old rigging shortened served for shrouds ; by two o'clock in the evening, the Spitfire was under her usual sail, a topmast pointed and every thing ready in the event of an emergency ; the wind having shifted a couple of points to the westward the Spitfire steered a course to make the Scilly Islands.

It was now that Snarling ventured to suggest to Albert the impending danger of running into an English port, to replace the short foremast. "Our character," said the hard working sailor is a little damaged in Europe, and at our own place at the Isle of Pines, we have lower masts all ready, cut, and dry and seasoned; and if I may be as bold as to say it, Sir, I think now we look more suspicious than ever, and less capable of giving leg bail."

"Snarling," said the Captain, "last night I read over the oath which binds us in one bond; there I see the power with which you have invested me. Say not another word, I have an object in view dearer to me than my exiled life, and that object I must and will accomplish. I do not intend to stay in any port to refit, I care not if we never anchor, but I must once more go to London. The thief who escapes the hounds of justice, the duellist who comes unscathed from frequent rencontres, the sailor who braves and surmounts a thousand dangers, all grow bold from their hair breadth escapes; the eye, the nerve, the ear, become familiar with danger, and are firm from

frequent incidents ; perilous, desperate, so have I become ! I found myself on the scaffold with Carlos, the very chair in which he was executed I touched, aye, even when he was in it and calling for assistance to the priest below ! I have been within five minutes of the hands of justice in England ; but I escaped their grasp and now accustomed to be near, but ever to evade, I go once more, and for the last time. Henceforth we must shift our grounds ; old England must be our greatest enemy ; we must not talk, Snarling, of Portsmouth harbour and all the scenes we have witnessed in our first burst of delight ; no, no, my old friend, we must forget our friends, our relations, our homes, and be driven like a weed in the Florida stream, wheresoever the wind and the sea impel us.”

“ I hope not, Sir,” said Snarling, “ and I’m not the man to hang my head down at either danger or difficulty ; but never again to see the shores of old England, never again to hear the cheerful song, or shuffle a dance with my old

friend, that's more than I bargained for when my lips muttered out the oath. Who cares for a little danger to see the land again?"

"Why just now, you told me how dangerous it was."

"But I forgot at that moment what you have now brought to my mind. D— it, I'd rather be hung in England than ride a horse with ribbons on his tail like a colonel of cavalry in Mexico! I'd rather sweep the streets with a log to my leg in Portsmouth, than be governor of St. Jago de Cuba."

"I am sorry I spoke of it, Snarling," said Albert, as his keen searching eye watched every movement of the weather beaten tar.

"It makes a man think a bit, Sir; for I never got into this scrape any more than yourself with my eyes open. I was obliged to enter for the craft, or to walk about looking for pearls in oyster shells at the bottom of the sea, but I always had a hope that one day or another, something might turn up, which would land us in England."

“ I do not see any chance, Snarling, excepting one, which might get us out of the scrape.”

“ Say what it is, Sir, and you know Tom Snarling well enough to trust him.”

“ Another time, Snarling, another time, we are all young yet, and I dare say you have not saved money enough.”

“ Money enough, Sir, why do you think I want to walk about with my hands in my pockets, wondering how long I’m to live, and be very busy doing nothing? I’m yet young enough for a frigate, and I’ll be in one yet before I die.”

It was but a few days after this conversation, which had been brought on by Albert merely to see how much love of home was left in the breast of his mate, that the Spitfire made the Ram Head, and Albert thought of landing, giving instructions to Snarling, to keep the schooner at sea, until the tenth day, when he was again to stand in and make the land. A certain flush of Snarling’s countenance alarmed him, and he at once resolved not to

hazard his crew, by the wavering disposition of his mate ; he was close to one of the Cawsand bay boats and he recognized instantly one of those men who formerly had screened him when he deserted. He feared to trust himself into his hands and without hesitation tacked and stood out to sea. It was sunset and the dark nights of December afforded him a shelter from observation.

Whilst Snarling paced the deck with hurried steps, Albert busied himself in arranging his papers, and settling in his mind the letters he was about to write. He inclosed the packet to Law, with an injunction, that it was on no account to be opened, but in the event of his death, which would be made known, when it occurred, to the lawyer. He was directed not to pursue any inquiries, concerning Sir Ronald de Lancy, or in any manner to disturb Lady de Lancy with rumours concerning the flight of Rawlinson ; and there was another letter which caused him much pain and time directed to Laura Mackenzie. It ran thus :—

“ My long silence might have caused dis-

pleasure, but circumstances can be pleaded in extenuation. I know all that has happened and more than you are aware of. I fear no rival in your affections, for my heart is confident of the honesty of your own ; you have pledged it to one whose wayward life estranges him from you, but you are ever present in the calm, the breeze, or the storm ; there is not a moment when your image deserts my mind, and seeing you thus ever by my side, I derive comfort and confidence in your absence. The man who insulted you has met his fate ; he has been relieved by the one, who next to yourself he would have injured ; he has received good from him whose revenge could not be better satisfied ;—you will never hear of him more ; his silence is sealed, although he lives in America. Of this strange communication, I pray you think kindly. I know of your being under the guardianship of Mr. Law ; by this conveyance he receives my will, with injunctions to open it and meet its wishes, if, at the end of six months, I do not appear and claim my bride ; I am close to you now, but I dare not see you

and you are ever present to me, Laura. My own, my dearest Laura, be in accordance with my wishes for this time, and at the expiration of the six months you shall be mine never to part, or I shall be no more, and my wealth yours. In all seasons, be kind and good to Herbert; for him I have made ample provision hereafter; place confidence in that excellent man who has befriended you already, listen to his advice and be to him a daughter; but if I yet can control you by my counsel, by my wishes, if the heart of Laura is not estranged from me, never write to Raven Castle; from that you are doomed to be a stranger until my return, then you may claim as a right, what has been accorded you as a civility. You may show this to your adviser; he will see more in it than perhaps you can divine. Believe in my love, in my constant unalterable affection; before six months are elapsed, I shall live in your presence, or die an exile; but I cling to the present, and in that hope urge you to believe me coming until the last moment of my allotted time. God bless you, and keep you under the

shadow of his protection. Again I say, believe, trust in me,

Your devoted,
ALBERT DE LANCY."

This, with a packet of papers and deeds and journals were landed by Albert himself at Plymouth, booked and directed to Mr. Law; he then returned to the Spitfire and with a heart considerably relieved, he stretched across the Atlantic to the Isle of Pines.

Although frequently chased, the Spitfire made good her passage, and took to the cavern of the pirates a considerable booty, in which were luxuries plundered from various vessels; these luxuries were handed over to the superannuated men, who wearied out life in utter seclusion; they had one or two canoes in which they amused themselves fishing, but they never dared hazard a trip to any other island, or to the main land. In the cavern far from the beach which surrounded the narrow inlet, old men and women lingered out life, having spent their early days in crime, and their old age in

idleness—too slothful to be rioters—too timid to depart; day after day, and night after night passed in the usual monotonous routine—love was withered, play alone survived there. By the light of a large lamp which once adorned a church, seated on carpets which covered the boards, these men of crime, and women, once of lasciviousness, gambled away their remaining days and nights, at *monté*; they had plenty of money, which although coveted, was useless, excepting on the arrival of the Spitfire, when some of the crew had articles of small value, of which they were anxious to dispose.

The dark sombre appearance of this cavern, which for years and years had been the resort, in times past, of the buccaneers, once or twice a year resounded with the gay notes of the human voice. The arrival of the Spitfire was the signal of general rejoicing; then all the long pent up restraint of drunkenness broke adrift; all the excesses to which a life of continued excitement prompts the inclination, were at once resorted to; the old endeavoured to become young, the young certain of becoming debili-

tated, orgies revolting to decency had been long customary when the schooner arrived, and drunken riots led to brawls and discontent; the night was wearied by the excesses, and the cool morning aroused them to the trifling labour, such inebriation allowed. There were no inhabitants but themselves; the small inlet which concealed the schooner from the sea, was unknown to the cruizers who seldom or ever landed on the island, and were ever seen by the vigilant pirates, who instantly withdrew to the cave, the mouth of which, even if discovered, would not tempt being explored.

On this island there were three or four negroes—the race doomed from the time of Adam to be slaves, these poor fellows had intended to run away from their masters on the Island of Cuba, and in order to procure money for their departure, they had taken a canoe, and landed in the Isle of Pines, to turn turtle during the night, and to sell them the next morning. They had made two successful trips, perceived by the pirates, and the third time, their last intended trip, they were surprised, seized and

made greater slaves their canoe was soon converted into fuel; by day they were unable to escape, and by night they were always secured. The drunken revel was their only hope, but before the night's debauch began, some wary pirate always secured them more firmly than before.

On this night a murder was committed, which Albert could not restrain, for his authority ceased when the crew landed. In the heat of excitement a bet was laid, that one of the crew was a better marksman than the other, and various means were devised to put the skill of each of the noisy braggadacios to the test.

“What’s the use,” said one, “of blazing away at a tree, when we shall quarrel about the exact centre? There’s old Mungo, who is now getting a leg as big as an elephant’s, who can scarcely crawl, and who is useless to us, and loathsome to himself, stick him against the tree, and the one who kills him wins the bet.”

Albert, who never allowed himself to be the

least inebriated, at once saw that a deed of horror would in all probability be carried into execution. To interfere with any show of authority would have led to some act of desperation of the old pirates, who were lords of the island, and to reason with drunken men was a waste of words. He however tried to turn their thoughts in another direction. He sat down, filled his glass, sung a song; a mark of hilarity long since disused by one whose every moment was a torment; he talked of their feats of plunder; their once daring inroad to the city of Mexico, their narrow escape from Puebla, their forced concealment in the woods of the Pinal; their frequent scenes of excitement at Medellin at Campeche, or on the coast of Honduras, but all in vain. No sooner had his story ended, than the same clamorous half drunken comrade recollected the wound his vanity had received, the bet he had made, and his disposition to put his skill to the test. Again, Albert endeavoured, by making him dead drunk, to avoid the horrible scene which might ensue. He was just in that state, to

know that further intoxication would render his vision incorrect; he was at that unfortunate pitch, when an excited man is alive to any plot, and cautious to avoid the consequences. Words ran high, and one of the old men unfortunately backed largely the skill of the quietest man; the whole crew seemed seized with the same hellish delight of slaughter, from which they had, for two years been held back by the authority of their Captain; their desire was fanned by one of the old superannuated wretches, who declared that Mungo was more troublesome than all the negroes put together, and that all hands had become tired of beating him in order to force him to his work, whilst the fainting wretch laid down and received their stripes without a murmur over his legs, now labouring under elephantiasis.

Once more, Albert for a second stopped their intentions by startling apprehensions of discovery by the noise of the muskets. A drunken man is ever valorous; wine places the drunkard who, when sober is a coward, on a par with the most valiant; his reason which prompts his

fear is quenched by wine, and as the danger is undervalued, it is despised.

“ Put him up, lug the lazy lumber to the tree ; he won’t walk there without assistance, but we’ll soon lead him along like a bull by the horns, and save him his morning’s beating.”

The poor object of this brutal bet was at that moment happy ; exhausted nature had lulled him to sleep, and in spite of the noisy brawl, the hoarse voices, the curses, execrations, clamorous choruses, or angry discussions, he slept soundly, quietly, even when his name was called. “ Mungo, come here, you sleepy hound,” resounded through the cavern, which at last awoke the victim ; but the poor fellow awoke to intense pain, and was unable to rise ; the delay occasioned a desire to inflict more cruelty ; one proposed trying the application of a red hot nail, others suggested the stick, and amidst the noise and the revelry, the excitement and the cruelty, the unfortunate black aroused himself, in spite of torments almost beyond imagination, and tottered to the table.

“ Carry this rope,” said one, as he threw some fathoms of small cord over his shoulders, “ carry this, and the lantern, and stay by the first tree.”

The grey-headed negro, smarting under every step, slowly proceeded to the spot ; and there sitting at its roots, he calmly awaited some other order ; he was ignorant of the bet, and of his destiny.

The party rose, and once again the voice of Albert, in the tone of command, called upon his crew to obey him, and desist ; instantly one of the older men interfered, for he would not allow the oath which bound the Spitfire crew to them, whilst at the island, to be weakened in force, by any giving orders, but those in whom all authority was reposed. It was now useless, indeed the last endeavour had only rendered the crew more clamorous, more determined. All intervention was now at an end ; the half drunken disputants selected their arms, and furnished themselves with ammunition, and during this interval, Albert endeavoured

once more to save the black, by carrying him to the schooner, and there asserting his authority.

The uneven ground rendered the attempt abortive, and the gallant fellow fell in the attempt ; too soon came the revellers ; the unfortunate wretch was lashed to a tree, and the murderers retired about one hundred yards ; the miserable lantern which shed its treacherous light, was placed upon a nail exactly over the head of Mungo, who stood with all the patient resignation of that much injured class, when their oppressors practice their wanton cruelties and barbarities ; he then scarcely murmured ; he saw their object, and in a tone piteous to hear, asked ; “ Why for kill poor Mungo ? ” even then the love of life subjected as it was, to every indignity, every torment, rose above the fear of death. So true it is, that the most loathsome life imagination can suggest, is paradise to what in death. Here was the slave, the miserable, we fear oppressed, and injured slave, who would have supplicated for existence, although

that existence would have been one of misery.

“Never mind, Mungo,” said one fellow, as he measured the ground, “you have at least an hour to stand upon those large legs. I’ll bet they don’t hit you to kill you under that time; so you have lots of minutes to get ready for the change.”

Once more the interposing voice of Albert was heard; he offered to buy Mungo, at an enormous price; but he was the general property, and the consent of all was requisite; this, it was useless to hope for. “For my sake,” he said, “grant the request at my supplication.” Now the lawless pirate was a moment freed from his oath, and then shewed his freedom. Beaten back and insulted, Albert shook hands with the black, who blessed him, and prayed that he might soon be free from such associates; in the prayer no one more earnestly joined than the Captain, but his heart sickened, when he thought how impossible, or improbable, such an event could be. He then retired to the furthest corner of the cave, as if

to avoid the sound, which would convey to him the death of the innocent black. Shot after shot, laugh after laugh, and groan succeeding groan, informed him of the progress of this hellish sport; the black had been wounded several times, but no fortunate sight directed the coup-de-grace; quite in vain they sought to decide their bet, neither could succeed in being the murderer, although their heart's warmest wishes were on each shot. At last the first man who had proposed the sport, in a rage at his continued misses, ran to the poor black, and placing the muzzle against his heart, discharged the gun. The head fell instantly forward, and the cords alone supported the murdered slave.

The scene of revelling was then renewed, and the first streak of dawn appeared before the disgusting debauch had finished; when the drunkard and the murderer sunk into temporary forgetfulness, to awake to sickness of body and of mind. There was one man who paced the island in all the excitement of men-

tal anguish. It was the Captain ; his cautious habit warned him to sweep the horizon, before he ventured to think of the last night's action. There was a vessel lying becalmed, some few miles from the island, with her boat lowered down ; the idle sail flapped against the mast, as the last of the land breeze died away, and the heat of the sun became oppressive ; on the smooth surface of this clear mirror of the skies, floated a man of war brig ; if any of the crew landed, the body of the black might betray them. In an instant he hurried to the cave, and called Snarling, who, with himself, had made an attempt to save the poor fellow ; and who, seeing the general disposition to drunkenness, had for once conquered his desire to participate in this sailors' recreation, and slept on board the schooner.

It was an instant of much alarm ; true, the Spitfire's fore-mast was replaced, the sails bent, and a light breeze gently swept the island, sufficient to have blown her clear of the harbour ; but her crew were drunk ; not a man

saving the two slaves, who still were ignorant of Mungo's death could stand, and here close to them, was a man-of-war-brig.

The first great object was to bury the dead, and those who had endeavoured to save, now buried the body ; there was no ceremony, no service, both dug the grave, and in the state in which he died, he was interred.

“ This is a sad end, Snarling,” said Albert, as he endeavoured to cool himself after the exertion ; “ and how soon we may share this man's fate, we can little guess ; the drunkards might have selected you as easily as Mungo, and our own men might have bet upon our death.”

“ Not whilst there is two of us sober, at any rate,” said Snarling. “ I wish I was clear of this net of the devil's ; he'll make a haul of us all, as sure as Mungo was his likeness ; what's to be done now, if the brig sends a boat ?”

“ I scarcely know, and can scarcely collect my senses sufficient to think ; fortunately, if they land, they will, in all probability, land on the nearest point ; then, without they traverse

the whole island, the schooner will be safe ; but if they venture into the wood, the footsteps of last night's folly may lead them to the cave ; the slaves would soon hail them as liberators ; and joining them, we should be sacrificed. There is the canoe which might save us, and as prudent men, we had better make preparations, by placing some provisions, the mast and sails in the canoe ; go and get her ready, whilst I watch the movement of the brig."

CHAPTER IX.

WHILST Snarling turned his attention to the canoe, as a place of refuge, he had time to think that a residence in Cuba with their former reputations so honorably gained in robbing the conducta at St. Jago, and having a perfect knowledge how expeditiously the Spaniards divested themselves of pirates whenever they fell into their hands, would not be quite so pleasant; and as to going farther in the canoe, that had its difficulties and its dangers, as land where they would, their deeds were recorded, he walked in silence, whilst his thoughts reverted to his past life, his future prospects, his present danger. It is in

moments like these, that the mind runs over years of the past in a second, and at the same time, mirrors the future. Snarling had very little in either state, of consolation; and he would gladly have allowed the oath to escape his memory, if the superstition of a seaman, had not fixed it indelibly there.

The Captain watched with intense anxiety the brig which for ever kept changing her position, as the current in its caprice, or a slight flaw of air swept past her. The boat was at first employed in throwing water over the sides of the brig, a custom common in hot climates. She was then made fast astern, and Albert from his place of concealment, felt a relief incomprehensible, as he saw the last man leave her, and actually heard the pipe to breakfast, which sound he well remembered. He was safe for a minute, but how to turn that moment to advantage. The drunken crew were proof against all attempts to rouse them from their slumbers. His endeavours to awaken the crew to the danger so very near, was ineffectual, and he returned to watch the brig. To his great

astonishment, he saw the boat had shoved off, and was pulling towards the island. There were only five hands in all, four of which, appeared like midshipmen whilst the fifth was in all probability the boat keeper. He ran to Snarling, and summoned him to his side, desiring him to bring muskets and pistols for both; again he made a desperate effort to arouse one, who appeared less drunk than the rest, but failing in all attempts, they concealed the entrance of the cave, by pieces of wood and shrubs, kept for the occasion. The papers of the Jonathan Dobbs were got in readiness, and every other one carefully concealed; all precautions taken, they awaited the arrival of their enemies with as much coolness and caution as was requisite.

The boat pulled direct to the shore, and in a few minutes, the four young men, one of whom was a lieutenant, and each carrying guns, landed. They trod cautiously along the beach, as if tracing the marks of the turtle, which are plentiful in those parts, in order to discover their eggs; but failing in this, they

appeared resolved to dive into the woods. Albert heard them give an order to the boat keeper, that in the event of any signal being hoisted from the brig, to discharge his musket. "Keep a good look out, do you hear, for directly the sea breeze comes down, the signal will be made."

"The sea breeze," murmured Albert, "never comes when it is wanted; there is not a cloud to the eastward, and to-day, the land breeze lasted an hour longer than usual; it will be eleven, three hours more, before we can expect this breeze; creep away, Snarling, to the farthest point, and take care not to be seen."

There would have been but little cause for alarm, had not the impatience of the Captain betrayed them. The midshipmen on arrival in the wood, discovered in the sandy soil, which is plentiful in the Isle of Pines, the mark of a man's foot; "And that," said the youngest, "is fresh, it has been done not five minutes ago."

"Some negroes I suppose, who came over from the main land for turtle?"

“ Not so, Sir !” said the forward youngster, “ for negroes wear no shoes ; and this is the print of rather a genteel foot, such a one, as might walk up the streets of Kingston, and half the blackies in the world would call out, massa buckra wid him lilly foot ; see here, Sir, there are the marks of two men !”

The lieutenant looked, and it was decided to trace the foot marks. “ You see, Sir,” continued the sharp youngster, “ these are no turtle hunters, or they would have gone to the beach ; they seem to have come thus far—one has advanced ten yards further, then both have retreated ; Mc. Coy, you Irish bog trotter, keep your hoof off the track, or you’ll tread the four into one, and we shall be all adrift in our search.”

A laugh at the Irish boy followed, and the party headed by the youngster, tracked the marks. His tongue was not idle as he walked along ; and the conversation, as the unerring track directed them in the pursuit, led them in the steps of Albert ; the place were Snarling

had separated was marked. Two followed him, each prepared for action, whilst the lieutenant followed those of Albert. Whenever a hard piece of ground could be found, or a small bush could defend the soil, on it Albert trod; but Snarling intent upon gaining a greater distance, forgot such prudent caution, and in his hurry, rounded a small knoll, from which the schooner was visible. No sooner did the youngster see her than he called out at the top of his shrill voice, that there was a prize in the creek. The Captain heard it, and as the lieutenant turned, he took a more circuitous route, and appeared just over the vessel.

“What the devil have we here?” said the youngster, whose eyes were every where; “why there have been a dozen men here; and here is the exact mark of a musket, and blood enough under this tree, to have floated a jolly boat; even the sand has not swallowed it all, and the stain is evident.”

“Killing a pig, you spalpeen,” said the Irish boy.

“ Pig, Paddy, do you think they tie a pig to a tree, to cut its throat with a musket ?”

So intent had the party been, that not one had seen Albert, who, concealing himself, left Snarling to pass off the schooner, and manufacture lies as fast as he could. The ends of cartridges which had been bitten off, were found by the youngster ; and so closely did he follow like a blood-hound, that he stepped to the grave of the black man, and called attention to the spot where Paddy’s pig was buried.

Snarling, observing the shrewdness of this hound of pirates, boldly advanced, and saluted the lieutenant almost before he saw him.

“ I calculate,” he began, “ you’re looking after turtle this morning ?”

“ Halloo !” said the lieutenant, looking up, “ what the devil brought you here ?”

“ My schooner I expect.”

“ Why, you are no yankee ; you are either Robinson of the Swiftsure, or you are his ghost.”

“ Then,” said Snarling with as unchangea-

ble a face as a turtle ; “ I expect I’m his ghost, for I’m not him.”

The lieutenant still continued to eye him carefully ; and the youngster, who had left the grave to hear the news, cut in, unasked, with his remarks. He was a privileged person, one of those spoilt midshipmen, whose tongue was ever ready with some flippant remark, and who, owing to the indiscrimination of the oldsters, mistook impertinence for wit.

“ Halloa, Jonathan,” he said, “ that jacket of yours was never cut in New York.”

“ It belonged,” replied Snarling, “ I calculate, to a Philadelphia lawyer ; a chap who grew so tall, that they cut him in pieces, on account of his impertinence, and I expect you are a walking piece of him.”

“ Put that in your pipe and smoke it,” ejaculated the Irishman.

“ Then I took his head for my share, and there’s no sense left in America.”

Snarling looked at him not much like a quiet American merchant ; his scowl, which manifested a person accustomed to resent in-

juries, rather than bear them, darkened his countenance.

“What schooner is that?” said the lieutenant.

“Mine,” said Snarling.

“Don’t you know the difference,” interrupted the youngster, “between what and whose; I expect, at any rate, you have no Philadelphia lawyer’s head.”

“I’ll try the thickness of yours,” said the pirate, rather off his guard.

“Silence, youngster,” said the lieutenant.

“I should like to see that yankee doodle put his paw upon me,” murmured the youngster, “and I would not be long before I put a ball through him.”

Snarling overheard him, he looked at him, as if he could have crushed him, and the prudent part he ought to play was quite forgotten.

“Do you allow your boys to insult a gentleman that way?” he asked.

The youngster burst into a fit of laughter,

at the word gentleman, in which he was joined by the other two, and hardly deserted by the lieutenant, over whose countenance a smile was perceptible ; whilst Snarling, who preferred action rather than words, seemed winding himself up, to take vengeance upon the musquitoe, who, even in his insignificance, so much annoyed him.

“ Let us hear no more of this,” said the lieutenant, who saw the symptoms of hostility in Snarling, and who was quite aware that the schooner had more than one man to navigate her ; indeed the cautious manner in which the crew were concealed, began to alarm the officer ; he was perfectly unprotected, and although his duty led him to examine the schooner, yet he was confident that great prudence was requisite.

As yet, only the masts had been visible ; but as he advanced, and the long, magnificent hull of this beautiful vessel appeared, he became alarmed, lest he should be detained, should she be one of those vessels which had lately committed serious depredations in those seas, and

which rejoiced in the uncomfortable name of pirates. What else could she be? The long gun was visible, the smaller guns were there; thirty men could not have worked her properly; and yet one man alone was visible, and this man, to the eye of the lieutenant, a deserter, whom he recollected himself on board the *Swiftsure*. The manner of Snarling, the bold, resolute daring bearing, convinced him that civility was the best policy. Once on board the brig, he was secure, then indeed the schooner could be entrapped; he therefore prepared to retreat, but in this he was interrupted by the arrival of the Captain, who saluting the lieutenant, begged him to inspect the vessel. The Captain had been close the whole time, and came forward, fearing a discovery if the intruders suddenly returned.

“Aye,” said the youngster, who imagined that no people under the sun dared insult his *Britannic Majesty’s* uniform; “this is the gentleman in the tippy bobby boots, there are at least thirty more of them somewhere.” The lieutenant gave him a look, but the youngster continued to his Irish messmate, “What with

the pig Paddy, the ends of the cartridges, the blood and the grave, I think we have stumbled upon as pretty a prize as ever floated ; and when I'm prize-master, I'll take the shine out of the Philadelphia lawyer there."

" She is the Jonathan Dobbs," said the Captain " and I am her commander, the papers are here, and you can inspect them."

The lieutenant, who was fearful of giving trouble, looked at his watch, and saying, " The breeze will soon be down, I must return on board," was on the point of retracing his steps, when the youngster said, " Come along, Pat, let's see how we'll divide the cabin," and prepared to leap into the vessel, when Snarling caught him by the collar, and turned him round, without the slightest effort, saying : ' When you are ordered on board, young *gentleman* ; then your obedience will be an excuse for your bad manners."

" Wait a little, my yankee skipper," said the youngster, " and I'll dance over those decks without your leave."

The Captain interposed, he was anxious to save time ; he requested the youngster to go on

board, and by way of bravado, he instantly leapt on her decks. She looked longer as he stood on board of her; he could not control his wonder; the tall main-mast raked so much, that its head plumbed the taffrail, whilst the fore-yard seemed long enough to make a frigate the same spar. He said with a kind of enthusiasm; "Here's a vessel, she answers the description of the pirate vessel of St. Jago de Cuba!"

There was a sudden flush suffused the face of the Captain, which did not escape the lieutenant. He called his youngster out of the schooner, and mentioning that the creek was unknown to the generality of vessels, asked merely, as a pretext for saying something, "What was the reason which brought the Jonathan Dobbs into the creek?"

"We sprung our top-mast," replied the Captain, "and seeing the tall pines here, I ventured to cut down one, and to make the mast; it was then we discovered the creek, and I came in for security, whilst my men worked; it saved

me some expense, and gave me an opportunity of caulking her bows; if you step this way, you will see how requisite it was."

"Well," said the youngster out-loud, "I say, Paddy, this is a second nonsuch, two decks and no bottom, five guns and two men; the top-mast is an end, and it's not a new one, but the fore-mast, (I wonder if these two gentlemen cut that out of the wood,) has never yet been greased."

"What an eye you have for an observation," said Snarling, "if you come with me into the wood, I'll show you the top-mast, that's the sprung one."

There was no inclination on the part of the youngster to accept this civil invitation; for at that moment the musket of the boatmen was heard. "There's the signal," said the lieutenant, "we must go back."

"You will find this a shorter way," said Snarling, as he volunteered to lead them a complete round.

"I fancy your shoes are a good track," said

the youngster, "we came here by that guide, and we had better go back by the same pilot."

"As you wish," said the Captain, and he followed the guide in the person of the midshipman. As he passed the trees, he said; "I wonder if burying pigs makes the pork better." He was considered a licensed talker; no one noticed the remark, but as the party drew away from the schooner, their pace was quickened; not a word was spoken, excepting by the youngster, who kept up a fire of his wit at his messmates, every now and then pointing to the print of Snarling's gentlemanly foot-mark, and gaining courage as he neared his boat, he remarked, "That for boots, they certainly were as much like the bottom of a scrubbing brush, as any covering for feet he had ever seen."

On gaining sight of the boat, the Captain and Snarling took their departure; they hastily retreated to the cave, whilst the youngster, now no longer controlled in the slightest man-

ner, declared the vessel a pirate, and the crew afraid to appear.

“ We will soon be after her, at any rate,” said the lieutenant, “ directly the sea breeze comes down, and the clouds are showing in some force to the eastward, we must not lose a moment.” Her sails were bent, “ and as to catching such a clipper as that in any breeze—”

“ A turtle,” said the youngster, “ in search of an Italian greyhound.”

“ Now then, give way, youngster, come and steer ; we must not do like midshipmen fatigued, keep looking how much farther we have to pull, but as prize money is dear to us, and pirates most enviable prizes, we must pull like Britons.”

The time consumed on the island, by the ingenuity of Albert, had tended to restore some of the drunkards to a greater disposition to wakefulness, and the rough manner in which they were handled by Snarling, and the Captain, made ten of them sufficiently awake

to stagger to the schooner. The first object was to get to sea, for when she was gone, the brig would be led away in pursuit, and the nest of hornets would remain undisturbed. The rest of the crew were carried to the schooner, and in spite of being dipped in the water alongside, continued dead drunk, and incapable of being aroused to any action.

The termination of the creek was in the centre of the island, where, around the anchorage, the tall pines shot up far beyond the height of the schooner's mast, and there secure from all winds, the Spitfire remained unseen from the sea, and scarcely perceptible, even when close on board of her. There was not now a breath of wind—the crew were all on board, and the elder pirates left in possession of their cave, quite unable to make any defence in the event of an attack.

A good look out was kept on the boat—she had at least, three miles to pull, and three miles to young gentlemen, whose hands are not much accustomed to such hard work, was a

distance not so easily performed. In spite of all the injunctions of the lieutenant, the crew did look to the distance they had to achieve, but their spirits were high ; there was a suspicious vessel close to them ; prize money was gleaming before their eyes, and promotion might be the result of an instant attack.

Most anxiously the Captain watched the proceeding on board the brig. The schooner was warped to the entrance of the creek, even here she was concealed, and although her sails were loosened, and the vessel only held by a hawser, yet the pines which grow nearly to the very water's edge, concealed her. The Captain had placed himself behind one of the trees with his glass, and his vigilance was soon rewarded ; the yards of the brig, which had been braced up on the starboard tack, were now squared, and a boat was soon swinging in the tackles, and hoisted out ; at this, he smiled in derision ; but suddenly recollecting the state of his crew, he became seriously alarmed. Snarling came and reported the Spitfire in as perfect

readiness, for any event, as she could be made. "What's in the wind now, Sir?" asked Snarling.

"She is hoisting her boats out, and even now there is the carriage of the boat's gun going into her launch."

"I think," said Snarling, "she had better leave that alone, for long Tom of ours will soon set all those boys swimming, and in this nice calm day we have plenty of sharks at hand to save us making prisoners."

"This day, Snarling, is the most sorrowful of my existence; I am pledged by an oath too solemn to break, and too cautiously worded to evade, to use my utmost endeavours to save the schooner, and protect the crew; I would as soon die, as fire upon that boat, and if I could, at this trying moment, escape in the canoe without compromising myself, most gladly would I avail myself of the shelter, almost hopeless as it is."

"Upon this occasion," said Snarling, "I would just as soon rid myself of the unpleasant

remembrance of the lieutenant;—he has too good a memory to be a good neighbour. What are they at now?”

“There’s the gun in the slings; the quarter boats are down, and there are now four boats in all; we have no time to lose, we must cast off the schooner, and sweep her as far as we can between the island and the main land; if a breeze comes, we can work to windward through the narrow passage, whilst any attempt to follow us there, would be the loss of the brig.”

“But supposing the sea breeze should not come down in spite of the appearance of those clouds, we are then caught by the boats.”

“If obliged to defend ourselves, we shall be enabled so to do, and in the event of a defeat, we must seek shelter on the Island of Cuba. I have no fear of the sea breeze, although it is late to-day; even now, I see it on the horizon; long before the boats can reach us, it will be down. Come to our work, Snarling, and I most sincerely hope that we may not be obliged to resort to arms; see, even the Captain of an

English man of war brig may make a mistake which will allow his adversary to escape : his boats will be half way on shore, before the breeze comes, and whilst he heaves to, to hoist them in again, we shall show him how long are our legs, and how quickly we can use them."

The Spitfire now cast off, and was towed clear of the creek. When she resorted to her sweeps, she was within three miles of the brig, and both vessels were in sight of each other. As she came round the point, and became visible, an unusual activity seemed to prevail on board of her pursuer ; the boats were sent ahead, and the brig's bow towed round towards the island, whilst the men were seen descending the side, into the launch ; shortly, her four boats cast off, and taking the launch in tow, they made towards the schooner.

It was not until this moment, that any hasty expression escaped the schooner's Captain ; had his crew been sober, he would have swept her nearly as fast as the boats pulled ; but now, he only weakened the already half exhausted men, who still hovered between drunkenness and so-

briety. Directly, the Spitfire was clear of the island, so as to take the sea breeze when it came down, the sweeps were abandoned, and the vessel prepared for action.

By this time, all the crew were awakened : but half were worse than useless, as they reeled about in all the lassitude and discontent of returning sobriety. The rest, about twenty in all, were alive to the danger that awaited them; half an hour would bring their enemies alongside ; more numerous than themselves, cheered on by an officer, whose promotion would reward his bravery ;—anxious, and eager for the contest, with assistance at hand, and with comrades who watched the result ; on the other hand was the hope of escape—the long catalogue of unatoned crimes, half unmanned the timid pirate ; all around was hostile ; at sea, the brig on shore, the plundered inhabitants of Cuba ; despair prompted resistance ; a certain death was the result of their capture ; the youngster's remark as to the description of the schooner, was a proof that her character

was justly estimated, and the pirate's usual desperate conduct was necessary, for death was close on board of him.

“It's merely the cloud beneath the sun, that makes the horizon dark,” said Snarling, with the utmost indifference, as he stood by his Captain; “there's not enough wind out there to shake a lady's curl. What's to be done now?”

The Captain looked at him, as he said, with much energy, “I hope the first shot may hit me;—I would rather die than fire upon them; but I would rather do that, than meet a death which awaits us all at Jamaica.”

“I'm not afraid of that, Sir; they would not take the pride of the sea in four hours, in those boats; all we have got to do, is to give our men a little spirits, just enough to wind them up a bit, and just let me catch that Philadelphia lawyer, and his mother shall have his ears sent home in a brown paper parcel. Shall we trice up the boarding nettings, and give them a gun to let them know, that long

Tom reaches a few yards beyond two miles?
We must fight, Sir. The oath, remember the
oath."

CHAPTER X.

THE boats now approached rapidly, and the sea breeze, if it was the breeze to windward, remained stationary ; it certainly never neared the schooner, although it looked black and cloudy to windward, and aloft the little clouds swept away hastily to the westward.

“ It is a fearful alternative,” said the Captain ; “ but I am like a bear hemmed in by its hunters, I must either die unresistingly, or make one desperate effort at escape ; it is over, all my pride of birth gives way to the fear of death. We will defend the schooner and fight.”

Snarling looked up with great surprise, and said coolly, “ Fight ! was there ever any doubt about that ? I expect not, as the young-

ster would say. I have taken a good swig of your humanity draught ; that half and half spirit and water mixture, which we talk over when the tide of danger is out, but now that it's flood tide of that unwelcome commodity, and the gentleman with the black cap and the rope's end within hail, I'm blessed if I swing without a struggle ; besides," continued this amphibious creature, " I should like to prove to young Philadelphia there, who is squeaking out to his men to come and hang us, that I've sense enough to know, that the longer I live, the more likely I am to have time to repent. There's cast off."

The boats had now got within a mile, when they cast off the tow, and appeared to make two divisions ; the launch and the jolly boat seemed inclined to make an attack on the starboard and the cutter and the gig on the larboard quarter ; having done this, they gave three cheers, in which the youngster's voice was heard above the rest ; for a woman's scream and a boy's squeak reach as far as the shot, whilst the grumble of the explosion in a

stiff breeze is hardly heard by the man who fired the gun.

“They hunt me to despair,” said the Captain to himself; “the voice of mercy would be stilled in my behalf, and the degradation of a public execution I can never abide. I have not shed one drop of blood in my own defence, or for my own fortune. There is no alternative now; our preparations may daunt, whilst our inactivity may tempt them. I feel clogged to my oath; these men would die for me, I must at least defend them. Fire the long gun, Snarling, over them.”

“Aye, aye, Sir; I’ll see how near I can drop it to the Philadelphia lawyer;” and strange it was, that even then Snarling felt more anxious for vengeance on the boy than he feared the coming host of seamen. The shot fell so close to the gig that for a moment the crew rested on their oars.

“They are wiping the spray off their rosy cheeks,” said Snarling. “I’ll give them a bath yet, and save them the trouble of drying their clothes.”

The schooner kept her bow sweeps out, and

presented her broadside to the coming foe. As the boats endeavoured to get on her quarter, the Spitfire's head was easily turned and the fatigue rendered greater to the assailants; they were now well within half a mile, and a couple of marines in the launch began to open a fire of musketry, directed principally aloft and with the hope of cutting away some of the rigging, so that, in the event of the breeze, the brig might gain upon the chase, before she could repair her damages.

The Captain now mustered his men, the danger had aroused them all; they had armed themselves for the fight, and there was a spirit of determination, coolness and contempt, visible amongst this selected crew which satisfied their Captain, that the boats had but a bad chance.

“Now then, young Philadelphia,” said Snarling. “I dare say you have often played at cricket; catch this ball.” The gun was fired and the gig sunk, the cutter instantly backed round to save the men, and the launch and the jolly boat laid on their oars, until they could proceed with the cutter.

Snarling took the glass and amused himself

with his remarks, as the crew of the gig were lugged into the cutter. "Now's our time," he said, "we might feed half the sharks in the seas this morning, if sinking such a set of ragamuffins could benefit us. Whew! if they don't fire their carronade better than that in the launch, we might pipe to dinner, and not one shot would decrease the number of our mess."

"The brig has got the sea breeze," said the Captain, as he watched the increase of sail which was soon crowded, "and now comes our chance; if that carronade should wound a lower mast, we must be taken; for the brig will be close on board of us, before we can catch the breeze."

"They are a gallant set of fellows in the boats," said Snarling; "in spite of the example of the swim, see how they come on, and there's young Philadelphia flourishing his cheese-toaster, as if he would spit us all. They'll be alongside now before the breeze comes."

"I would rather not fire any more, Snarling. I think we might get away without any blood-

shed yet, have every thing ready to crowd all sail; that brig makes too much foam about the bows to be much of a clipper, but the cursed breeze seems hardly to keep half a mile a head of her."

"It never rains, but it pours," said Snarling, "and misfortunes come down like hail stones when they begin. I'm blessed if there ain't the niggers got adrift from the cave waving a flag to the boats, there's an end to our anchorage; and as to the senior officers, every man will dangle to cocoa nut trees, and swing about in the sea breeze like bundles of dirty clothes."

"One part of the oath," said Albert, "will be absolved, and thus we shall be relieved from the necessity of returning to this place, which, from this day, will be examined by every cruizer in these seas."

"Did you ever see a set of niggers on a holiday, making such a row as those fellows. Why as I'm alive they have got old Jones with a rope round his neck! I suspect they are going to pay him off for the liberty our crew took with Mungo. It's all up in that quarter,

there'll be death enough on the island, without our going back to swell the numbers; Lord love those fellows in that launch, they would not hit a church in an hour; that's five shots they have fired and not one hit, they are coming close enough now."

The voices of the gallant fellows, as they pulled towards their superior in force, was now distinctly heard. They saw the approaching breeze and they struggled to gain their prize, before the presence of the brig should rob them of half the honour. A light air had caught the schooner, which now had steerage way upon her; as the light flaws of wind heralded the stronger breeze, the crews of the boats redoubled their efforts and were within half pistol shot. Snarling kept his eye upon them, over the taffrail, and when he saw the youngster draw a pistol to take a shot, he raised himself up and allowed a fair mark; the ball whizzed close by his ear. "Now it's my turn, young lawyer," he called out, as he drew his pistol: the gallant little fellow heard him

distinctly, for they were close under the stern, he took a steady aim and was on the point of firing, when the Captain knocked the pistol in the air, saying: "Take no revenge on a boy, we are safe; although within four boat hooks length of us, they will never touch us; hurrah, the breeze has caught us aloft."

Had the launch, when the breeze was observed to have caught the schooner, given up the useless hope of catching her and had contented herself with firing her carronade at the rigging, some mischief might have been done; but hope scarcely ever flags when promotion is in sight. The gallant officer urged his crew to redoubled efforts; they pulled as only British seamen pull in such desperate enterprizes; the eye of expectation failed to see the increasing distance of the schooner, until at last even hope dwindled and the carronade was resorted to, but entirely without effect for each shot verified the old saying, 'the more haste the less speed.' The gun was no sooner loaded, than it was fired without much aim, and the

Spitfire having caught the strength of the breeze, was now running to leeward under all her canvass, untouched even by the long nine pounders of the brig, which passed over and over her.

But the Captain had calculated rightly ; it was now useless persevering in the chase ; the schooner soon showed her superiority of sailing ; the brig overtook her boats, and in order to hoist them in, it was requisite to heave to.

No sooner was this done than the schooner hove to also ; she was about half a mile out of shot, and hoisted American colours ; her object was now to watch the motions of the brig, secure in her decided superiority. She ran but little risk by this apparent imprudence, the Captain being resolved if possible, to act up to the purport of the oath, which bound the crew of the Spitfire to the assistance of their comrades in every manner, within the range of possibility.

The brig soon stood close in shore, and her boats were seen to land. It was now evident that the nest, or the retreat of the pirates must

be discovered ; there was no possibility of resistance, the schooner therefore made sail, and hauling close on a wind, manifested an intention of getting to windward of the island ; but observing that the brig, when her boats returned, still hovered about under her easy sail, she bore up and ran away towards the gulf of Mexico. She was soon out of sight to leeward, when shortening sail, she kept close under the land of Cuba, and hauled close on a wind ; resolved once more to visit the island, and to remove some bags of money, which, in their store holes, might have eluded the search of the brig ; besides which, it was most requisite to learn the fate of their companions, and seek another asylum for the future.

About six in the evening, the sea breeze died away, and by seven, the Spitfire was creeping along close to the shore, favoured by the land breeze ; at the close of day, there was nothing in sight, and the Isle of Pines was on the starboard bow ; by two in the morning, the boat was sent with orders, not on any account to land near the creek, but cautiously

to explore the island, landing at a point, furthest removed from the cave. This ticklish duty was confided to Snarling; his men were armed, and discretion urged as strongly requisite; for simple as the affair appeared, it was not without much danger and much difficulty. The Spitfire hove to between the island and the main land, keeping close in shore, and under the smallest sail.

It was a night of much anxiety to her Captain; the only spot on the whole earth to which he could, unmolested, have retired, was perhaps discovered; and those who had passed a youth of crime, in which murder, theft and spoliation were reckoned, surprized. Here the pirate died of lingering age, at least free from the apprehension of the law; and here on an almost desert island, the youth of crime might be atoned by an age of patience and prayer. It was the only refuge for the wandering bark which seemed outlawed from every nation; she was the wild bird chased from every shore, and like the sea gull, made her home upon the waters; one only spot

was a haven to her, and that was now perhaps discovered.

With the recklessness of men accustomed to desperate deeds, the boat's crew indulging in their usual levity, left the schooner. Snarling promised himself some recreation if the Philadelphia lawyer fell into his hands ; and the rest who felt the cave their only safe home, vowed undisguised vengeance against any intruders. This was merely vented alongside, for when they shoved off, the muffled oar, the cautious stroke, glided the silent boat to her destination ; as they approached the shore, not a word was spoken, the oars were barely lifted above the surface of the water, and then dipped silently again, avoiding as much as possible, the phosphorescent appearance which the slightest movement on the surface occasioned ; at last the boat's keel grated upon the sand ; all but two landed ; they were desired to keep her afloat, and sufficiently far off, to prevent any one suddenly seizing her bow, and making a prize of her.

Snarling, as far as his nautical talents were concerned, was an able seaman in every sense of the word; he was an adept at a surprise, or at plundering a church, or robbing a conducta of mules; but he had never commanded one of those silent parties, where so much discretion and caution are required; instead of advancing too stealthily, all hands went on together, cautiously it is true, but not with that prudent concealment which was so requisite. The moon was bright, the stars, like so many lamps, illumined the heavens, and objects were discernible when clear of the trees, at any great distance. One of the crew hinted, that the obscurity of the wood would enable them to reach the cave undiscovered; others hinted, that the brig was far away, and that they might sing a song, with the lungs of a boatswain, and not disturb any thing but the turtle; another suggested, the open ground as least liable to impede their progress, whilst another laughed at all danger, and recommended getting over the business with the greatest dispatch.

In the multitude of counsellors, there is wisdom we are told; but to a wavering mind, there is no calamity greater than in listening to the tongues of many, each eager to advocate his own views; the waverer is swayed to and fro, as each man states his reason, and generally resigns himself to the voice of his friend, although that friend could flatter but not advise.

Snarling was a man prompt in action, when the object was visible before him; one who always relied more upon force and boldness, than stratagem, a despiser of danger, one desperate as a wounded tiger, without that animal's cunning in concealment; he therefore fell into the hint given by him who was for the more speedy arrival at their end, although they walked in the open moonlight; this being resolved upon, the crew advanced all in a cluster, and just as evident to any one expecting such a visitation, as if it was done in broad daylight.

As they advanced towards the cave, and as

they glanced their eyes along the creek, they became less reserved, and talked aloud.

“There’s no boat there,” said one; “we have it all our own way, and the sooner we finish the business the better.”

“Shove ahead for the cave,” said another.

“If the rest of our companions, and the blacks are gone, we know the worst,” said Snarling; “and then the sooner we get up the bags of dollars and doubloons the better. Here we are, now for it.”

“Spitfire!” said Snarling, as he gave a signal, the one always used to awake the attention of the pirates; there was no answer.

“Strike a light, shipmate, and let’s see the worst of it,” said Snarling. “Now then, lads, one and all into the cave;” the lantern, which had been brought for the occasion, was lighted, and in obedience to the order, all descended into the opening, all equally anxious to save what they themselves had concealed.

The cave at first, was long, narrow and low,

but after about forty feet had been passed, it opened into a spacious place, for which several excavations had been made by the pirates of former days, when the West Indies was infested by the buccaneers, and when the Island of Pines was their principal resort ; these had been enlarged by succeeding adventurers, and at last had been finished, and brought to some degree of comfort ; from these places of concealment for powder, ammunition, gold, provisions, and arms had been made, and most of the openings were kept so cautiously closed, that few would have made the discovery ; the island in fact, was worked as regularly underground as a wasp's nest ; for it had been the resort of pirates from their earliest date, and each improved the work of their predecessor.

There was no soul in the cave to welcome the men, who, true to their oaths, had come to succour, and to save ; each part was rummaged, in vain. The voice of the pirates re-echoed along the excavation ; there was no reply ; in one corner, a number of small pieces of the pine tree, split into long sticks, and used as

candles, was discovered ; each man instantly procured a light, and the scene of the last night's carouse was again illumined ; bottles and glasses were thrown about ; the remnant of the supper still remained, and the whole presented a view of a cave, after a multitude had feasted therein. It was now determined to examine every stow hole of the retreat, and it was evident not one of these had been found out. There, untouched, as a trifling quantity of earth was removed, lay the wealth of the pirates. Bags of doubloons, and boxes of dollars ; gold coins of each nation ; silver, copper, and paper monies of all sorts and descriptions, in large quantities were drawn forth, and placed in the large cave, ready for removal.

The magazine and store of arms were found likewise untouched, and the casks of powder were rolled nearer to the mouth of the cave, away from the lights ; they had more than the boat could carry at one trip, and haste was requisite to make two before the morning dawned. Another cell produced boxes of clothes, containing, from the garb of a monk, to

the dress of a mountebank ; they were thrown about in wild confusion, whilst the cellar, affording, as it did, a plentiful supply was resorted to, by those who required stimulants to exertion ; but of all the produce of the cave, the money and the powder was the most valuable, and these were the first to be removed.

On a closer examination, a pistol was found which had evidently belonged to an officer of the brig, and in another corner was the dirk of the young midshipman. Snarling looked at this, and recognised it; a bitter smile came over his countenance, and he vowed a secret vengeance against the unfledged boy, who had hurt him more by his words than the dirk could have done. “Now, lads,” he said, “let’s have a glass each, and then to work ; the best plan will be, to bring the boat into the creek, close up to the cave, and then we shall soon ship our stores, and be off to another part of the world.”

The crew worked hard, and the proposition was received with considerable applause. Some bottles of old brandy were produced,

and some glasses speedily supplied; but as the weather was hot, it was proposed by Snarling, that nothing stronger than half and half should be taken; it was agreed to, and one of the youngest was desired to go to the well for some water. These wells being made by sinking a cask with small holes in the bottom of it, in the sand near the shore; whether the water thus procured, is a filtration from the sea, or an oozing of a deep underground spring, for shallow springs are rarely found, is undecided; but it is a mode by which ships are supplied with water, in many places of the world. A pitcher, which had long been used for the occasion, was given, and he started to the aperture on his mission, whilst the rest sat round the table preparing their glasses. It was but a minute, and the trembling pirate stood amongst them, having dropped the pitcher from his hand; he could not speak, but his blanched cheek and quivering lip, announced some unusual panic.

“What is it?” said Snarling, as he jumped

from his seat, and drew his cutlass, "speak man !"

"Can't you drop a word, *a word* Sam?" said another, with consummate coolness, "just as quickly as you dropped the pitcher."

The trembling pirate placed his finger to his lips, and in the expression of his countenance, the necessity of silence was urged; his hands, like those of a palsied man, gave the lips a tremulous motion, and the fear became universal; with his right hand, he pointed to the mouth of the cave, and then struggling within himself as if to whisper, his voice broke through the restraint, and he said "The mouth is choked up."

"Hell, and the devil," said Snarling "speak, man; what do you mean?"

"The cave is closed, and I heard voices in whispers, round the entrance."

There was one universal shudder, and Snarling's signal for silence, was obeyed by those who feared to speak; the lights were removed to one of the passages above mentioned, and the mate himself crept cautiously to the

mouth ; it was too true ; large trees which had previously been cut down, and sawed to fit the entrance, were placed across, whilst upright held these securely in their place ; the moon's ray was sufficient to show the imprisoned pirate the impossibility of forcing an outlet ; whilst the entrance was guarded by only two men, for only one could advance at a time from the cavern, and that in a bent position he listened, and he heard the voice of the youngster, whose cunning had prepared the trap for them.

“ We have them now,” he said, “ like a nest of hornets, with the hole stopped up, and now we are all ready for them—we had better give the alarm at once. Have they secured their boat ?”

“ Randall is just returned, he has got the boat, and the two men, who were left in it. The boat has been scuttled according to the lieutenant's orders, who will be here in a minute.”

“ I think my friend in the box there,” said the youngster, “ will remember the Philadelphia lawyer as long as he lives, which will be about half an hour from this date. We'll

smoke them like wasps ; I was always a capital hand at that when at school."

Snarling's return with the intelligence only magnified the apprehensions before entertained; there was no possible outlet, and it now was too evident, that in walking along in the bright moonlight they had been watched, and allowed to enter the cave, and from the manner in which it was blocked up, it was likewise evident that the wood had been prepared during the day, and every precaution taken to insure the capture of the pirates that the crew of the brig had cautiously concealed themselves, and now superior in strength, and in position, they were laughing at their own success.

"There's only one thing left for it," said Snarling, whose whole mind was running on the ruin of the midshipman, more than his own safety; "and that's done as quickly as the screw killed Carlos. We are left the choice of two deaths, for as to escape, that is out of the power of even ourselves."

"Don't let's be in a hurry," said the cool gentleman; "I remember a parson in England

who always said, ‘sufficient for the day, is the evil thereof!’ and that being the case, let us see what can be done; now, there’s an animal, they call a mole, which works its way up, or down in the earth, and I’m a thinking, that if we were to begin with a good will, we might get out of this uncomfortable fix, as Jonathan says, without giving young Philadelphia the trouble of removing his blockading trees. Give us that bottle, Sam, and don’t be shivering, and changing colour, like a dying dolphin?”

“Where, and how are we to begin?” said Snarling.

“At the further end of the cave,” replied the first man; “and whilst those gentlemen are watching for us at the entrance, we’ll creep out at the back door.”

“But the boat is taken and scuttled.”

“All the better, because then we must fight the harder; come along, lads.”

It was evident that the plan proposed could never succeed; the cave ran downwards from its mouth, with a gentle, but regular inclina-

tion, whilst above, it was known to all, the ground gradually rose ; the attempt was made, but it was soon relinquished, for a long iron was driven with continued strokes in an upward direction, several feet ; it was evident, from the increased strength required to force it onward, that it had not perforated entirely through, and although it was relinquished at one point, it was tried at another with apparently less success ; but another affair soon drew their attention from their undertaking, it was the squeaking voice of the youngster, which being more shrill than that of the older person, reached the furthest point, at which the pirates were at work.

“ Now,” said Snarling, “ what is to be done, do we surrender, or do we resist to the last ? ”

“ Why, we can but surrender after all,” said the cool seaman ; “ we have provisions enough for a month, or a year, and we have wine by dozens ; hold on, to be sure, if we have nothing left but our eye lashes, to cling with ; although we have failed here, we may yet suc-

ceed elsewhere. Take no notice of the squeaker. Hand here that iron rod, and let us try again, in the opposite direction."

The crew of the brig having secured the two pirates, and destroyed the boat, now began to think of decisive measures, in regard to the people in the cave; only a few were kept at its mouth, as it was impossible to force an exit there; the rest were dispersed within a short distance of each other, to listen if any attempt were made to force an egress elsewhere.

"I say," began Snarling, to the cool man, "I want to speak a word with you before we part; just a whisper over this wine."

"I'm your man," replied the other, "let's have it, clear off the reel."

This attracted the attention of the rest; Snarling and his companion were earnest in their remarks, until the latter starting up, and banging his hand against the table, said, "There's not your equal for boldness, Snarling, in all the world, and America besides; we'll do it, and the sooner we set about it the better,

for if we do it at all, it must be before daylight."

"Better say nothing about it, until the last moment, Bill."

"Certainly not, replied the sailor, "half the world are scared at an open declaration, whilst the other half face twenty times the danger when it is wrapped up in a secret. Here, my lads, let's blockade them out, roll the powder casks as gently as you can towards the mouth of the cave, never mind a shot; get them close up, and we'll barricade them out, and then have a jollification."

The order was speedily obeyed, and the smallest barrels were carried, and safely deposited about six feet from the orifice of the cave; one being placed upon the other, until the aperture was completely stopped; the pirates then retreated into one of the passages, and began to think of their situation; whilst employed, they viewed it not with the apprehension which it merited; now released from labour, they saw themselves encaged—secured.

Snarling was the only one absent; the cool sailor talked to his comrades of hair breadth escapes, and laughed at the present difficulty, as one sure to be overcome; "Its only one struggle, and we shall be free, so let us see ourselves well armed, and ready for the fight." Each man's pistols were examined, the balls were drawn and cut into four pieces, as being more destructive in close quarters; the cutlasses were looked to, and all hands declared themselves ready when Snarling appeared.

"Now, my lads, the halter, or the Spitfire, a gaol, or freedom. Are you ready for a rush?"

Each answered, "ready," and each asked "how they were to make a rush, or who was to lead?"

"We'll all go together," said Snarling, "but I must have Philadelphia Bill, that youngster's more hateful to me, than a hundred men."

"What! do you think about a boy, who could scarcely harm you, if you let him poke at you for a fortnight?"

"Why do people feel more hurt, Bill, if a

fool says a sharp thing, than if it came from a clever fellow ?”

“ Can’t say, shipmate.”

“ A musquitoe,” said Snarling, “ stings sharper than a big blue bottle can bite. Are you ready, lads ?”

“ All ready.”

“ When you hear a noise loud enough to startle you, make a rush to the mouth of the cave, and then every man for himself, and God for us all.”

It never occurred to any of these men, the mockery of calling on *Him* for assistance, when their object was blood and slaughter. More enlightened people than seamen fall into the same extravagance, and pray that the Omnipotent power may *fight* on their side.

“ We are all ready,” said Snarling, as he advanced as near to the powder barrels as he could, and spoke as loudly as he was able to “ Surrender on terms ?”

“ Terms !” said the youngster, whose gallantry and readiness, made him a favorite, “ I suppose a choice of smoking, or hanging.”

“ We give no terms,” said the lieutenant

interrupting, "you are our prisoner, and your delaying to surrender, will not make your capture one jot the less certain."

"We'll dig you out of the earth like wasps," said the youngster, "and give your eggs to fatten the chickens."

"Then," continued Snarling, "you refuse to let us go free, even if we put enormous wealth in your hands?"

"Well, Sir!" said the youngster, "that is an insult, that the hangman can only revenge; it is an insult to our senses, as well as to our honour; if the money is there, we shall find it, and no thanks to them; so that the second insult of the bribery and corruption, merges into the first."

"Don't talk so fast, youngster; tell him again, that we have no terms to offer, and that an unconditional surrender, will save bloodshed, and leave them at the last hour some small praise."

"Aye, aye Sir! do you hear yon chap in the cave? The lieutenant says, that the only terms he can offer you are these, either to hang yourselves down there, or to be hung at

Jamaica ; and as it is a matter of no importance to us, if the worms or the birds pick at your carcasses, you may take your choice."

Scarcely had the youngster finished his interpretation of his orders, when Snarling calling out to his men to be in readiness, grasped a lighted pine stick, a second afterwards, a dreadful explosion occurred ; the mouth of the cave was enlarged more than thirty feet ; the earth was thrown aloft in the air, and fell far away at sea ; the roots of the tall pines, the growth of years were torn from their firm hold, the long stems were hurled in various directions, and the shrivelled skeletons of human beings, blackened, scorched, disfigured ; fell headlong like arrows into the deep. The whole island shook ; the sound of the dreadful explosion reverberated along the shores of Cuba ; a sudden calm prevailed, as if nature held her breath with alarm, and the noise of fallen stones, huge trees, or heavy spars alone disturbed the death-like horror of the moment.

Not a man issued from the cave ; the death they merited from the law, they inflicted upon

themselves ; fifty times the quantity of powder requisite for the consummation of their plot had been used ; the earth, at the surface near the aperture, was blown far, far away ; whilst the instantaneous concussion, produced by the explosion, rent the earth from the interior of the cave, and buried the pirates beneath its enormous weight.

They might have struggled for a moment, but there remained by the side of their ill-gotten wealth, the bodies of the thieves ; and there, not far from the cave, was disinterred by the rude shock, as a kind of evidence against the murderers, the corpse of the poor black slave.

Only one voice was heard, and it the next day recorded the fact. “ That blow up,” said a young shrill tone, “ would have puzzled any but a Philadelphia lawyer.”

CHAPTER XI.

“THE time is nearly expired,” said Mr. Law, as he sat by the side of Laura Mackenzie ; “ five months and three weeks have elapsed, since the date of his letter ; in another week, the mystery will be unravelled, or we shall read from his will, the secrets of his heart.”

“ I shiver with cold,” said Laura, as she drew nearer the fire, “ this dark, windy, gusty night, is well chosen to speak of deaths and wills !”

“ It is sometimes difficult to begin a conversation, fair lady ; some find a snuff box a good preface ; others talk of the weather, others more absent, or forgetful of former, friendships ; inquire particularly after the

health of a person, who had been buried a year, and almost forgotten six months ; but with us the ice is broken, the subject broached ; and as it must be discussed, the sooner we do it with the least expenditure of words the better.”

“Then talk of his return, his probable return, as with one exception he has been faithful to his word ; teach me to trust in that, speak of him kindly, and encourage that hope, which is the solace of my existence !”

“ I don’t think, Miss Laura, that all these words would be necessary in a marriage settlement.”

“ Nonsense, Mr. Law,” said Laura, as she allowed her hand to remain in his grasp ; “ you are my best, my only friend—oh, what should I have done, if you had forsaken me ?”

“ There is One above, who protects the innocent, and shields the orphan : but to our business ; in a week’s time that parcel must be opened.”

“ Not if he comes back—and return he will !” interrupted the impassioned girl.

“ I’m quite aware of that, girl, you might have saved your breath ; if he comes back, all the papers go to the housemaid to light the fires ; but if he does not, and the time is short, we must look on him as dead, and Sir Albert de Lancy will never have a slab in the church to record his name, without you or I put it there.”

“ Sir Albert de Lancy !” muttered Laura, “ his brother is not dead, as he has a son ?”

“ Thank you for this information, your news is particularly fresh to night : but I repeat, no, that’s a waste of words, but what I said would be the case.”

“ Do not be angry with me, Mr. Law,” said Laura, as a tear startled in her eye.

“ Angry ! you angel, not I ; it is an office, which habit makes me answer now and then rather rudely ; for when I first rose in my profession, I had a clerk who never could relate a fact, without encumbering it with so much extraneous matter, that it took my mind half an hour to unload the subject of what never belonged to it ; this made me hasty, and perhaps my custom of reproach, when one leaves

the subject in discussion, makes me ruder than I am by nature. If I were a member in the house of commons, I should always be called to order : there they waste more time upon frivolities than a nursery load of girls surrounded by twopenny toys, and the last thing they talk of is the subject of discussion."

"How the wind howls, and the rain patters against the windows ; how I pity the sailor, who, exposed to the inclemency of such weather, feels doubly the horror of his situation from the remembrance of happier days, and a warmer habitation !"

"Aye, aye, Miss Laura, if Albert had not been a sailor, you would have let that wind whistle without a remark, and left all the sailors of England to be wrecked without a sigh. But, to our point ; are you prepared to bear the idea that Sir Albert de Lancy is dead, if he does not return to the day ?"

"I will never believe it until the fact is too evident to be doubted, or years have passed and the sea never betrayed its secret. Why be rigid as to the day ? Give him another month,

believe me, Mr. Law, he will return ;—the wind, perhaps, has been treacherous, some trifling occurrence might have detained him in port or even now his vessel might be in security in some neighbouring harbour, protected from this dreadful storm.”

“ Or—”

“ Or,” interrupted Laura, “she may be wrecked ; do not you say so ? for you seem to look into events with a kind of prophetic eye.”

“ You are a wonder of constancy, Laura, and should stand alone, apart from your sex ; such feelings of yours must not be dulled, such hopes must not be blighted, we will talk no more about it, excepting as far as regards those papers. His injunctions relative to them are positive, and I dare not disobey them ; but you have one consolation, although I consider him dead, it is no reason he should be so and that being disposed of, let us talk about your own affairs. In the first place, a reconciliation has taken place between your uncle and ourselves : he has relinquished all claims upon the

estate, on a promise on our parts, that a sum of ten thousand pounds should be settled immediately upon his son, a midshipman in the West Indies, and a boy of much promise; this lad has had a miraculous escape from an explosion occasioned by some pirates, and is on his return home, having suffered much from the hurt he received; it appears every man was killed but himself—fever followed the explosion, and the boy has been sent home for the recovery of his health. I yielded to this proposition on your part; in the first place, under your own instructions, to give almost all, rather than your uncle should expose himself by going into court, where he must not only be beaten, but would render himself odious from his desire to leave one so generous as yourself in poverty, and secondly, from his giving up every part of the money himself, for the sake of his child. This last gave me some hopes, that he had been urged on from the knowledge, that the boy would be left in slender circumstances, had the father died. I could not but applaud the feeling which

prompted even the cruelty to you; these parchments are merely the deeds conveying the money to the trustees, which you are to sign if my arrangement meets your approval."

"Give me a pen, I needed not this *long* explanation, from one so coy of his words. Whatever you *think* is best, that I will always do, but I have a request to make, that my uncle may visit me, with his son, and that the terms I exact for complying in this matter, are, that the subject is never alluded to, and that one expression of thanks violates the contract."

"Generous little devil," said Law, muttering between his teeth, "there, this is one of the spirits sent on earth to wean men from their devotion, and lead them into idolatry."

"What's that fine speech, my dear friend?"

"You must have a witness before you sign that parchment. I'm afraid the wind has given me cold, for my eyes feel very heavy."

"Never mind your cold, it will save you

from seeing too plainly any idol in any shrine ; let us sign this parchment, my mind will be happier when this good uncle of mine finds his son in affluence.”

Mr. Law’s clerk was called in ; he knew his master too well to say a word, he spread out the deed, whilst Mr. Law amused himself with a pocket handkerchief, and gave sundry indications of a very sudden cold, by blowing his nose, wiping his eyes, and endeavouring to get up a cough. The clerk pointed out the place of signature, and in a moment Laura dashed her name ; it was properly attested, and the deed removed, when Laura, throwing her arms round the neck of her legal adviser, gave him a kiss, and said, “ There’s your fee, as far as regards my heart ; if *he* could but return before the time, I should be the happiest girl in England.”

“ I should have said you were the best, if you had not kissed me ; gads, my life, I feel almost young again, myself, and now, that our work is done, we will have some tea, and then you shall sing me a song, but not one of those

moonlight ditties, child—something gay, lively, funny, any thing, to let me feel for half an hour, the pleasure I now experience.” Laura was instantly at the piano, having rung the bell, and Mr. Law’s fingers were nearly tired with snapping an accompaniment; his feet, fingers, arms, hands and legs, seemed all to come in for a share of the work, as he either whistled or hummed the air which Laura sung; and when the song was concluded he bowed his head with much gravity, and remarked, that he was afraid to encore it, as his accompaniment might not be appreciated. It was sung again, and Law, as he wished her good night, remarked that for forty years, he never had felt unalloyed pleasure, until this evening; that now he believed, he might forget the misery of the past, and sometimes hear from Lady de Lancy, the same song as she had sung that evening.

Laura took his hand; “Unkind man,” she said, playfully, “you have enjoyed your evening, and leave me to a sleepless night.”

“ How so, child ?” said old Law as he patted her on the hand.

“ Because you have hinted at a secret, in the title of Sir Albert de Lancy, and you have left a woman condemned to vigilance of thought, in endeavouring to unravel the mystery. I cannot sleep but under a promise, (if nothing at variance with your honor prevents you) that you will, within five days reveal it to me.”

“ You said if *he* came back, you should be the happiest girl in England. If he does come back, he will explain it himself, if not, you had better not seek to know a secret, which is generally a burthen to a female heart to carry without sharing the load with another, and which, when known, would lead you to think worse of human nature ; therefore promise to wait contented but a few days, and if he returns, I’d promise you all the pleasures derived from a title, and with Raven Castle, to leave as an heir-loom. Good night, child, if virtue is peace of mind, contentment, and happiness, your pillow will not this night be turn-

ed upon in broken slumbers, but sleep, such as alone the good experience, or the poor receive as a recompence for the labour imposed by men, will be your reward.—How very hard it blows, I hope my chimney pots will not render a coroner's inquest necessary to be held in my house !”

Laura watched her benefactor as he slowly ascended the stairs, then musing to herself, followed the train of thought which Mr. Law's conduct had inspired. Ungenerous, she thought, to fix a term of reproach upon a whole community, or brand with opprobrium a sect in religion ; this one man redeems a thousand villanies, which the low caviller, the hungry attorney might fix upon his profession ; where is a man so much to be envied, as when having the power to defend the weak, and oppose the oppressor, he disregards all personal profit, and works in the cause of the destitute ? Who could be more envied than the physician, who seeks by his knowledge to assuage the pains and aches of the wretched, or who gives some portion of his time to the friendless, and the

poor ; but the attorney, who honestly defends his client, and who rescues the lamb from the claws of the wolf. “ God bless him,” said Laura, “ if the prayers of a grateful heart avail in heaven, God bless him.”

The gale of wind, which blew with unabated fury, was the cause of wrecks innumerable, upon the shores of England and Ireland ; and although Laura scanned with eager eye, every paragraph which had reference to the disasters, nothing occurred to make her more uneasy, as to the fate of her lover. The Spitfire was nowhere mentioned, neither was there any doubt, as to the name and characters of the vessels wrecked upon the coast. If the crew were swallowed up in the surf, the stern frame and portions of cargo washed on shore, gave some clue to the trade of the vessel. For four days the wind continued, and although Mr. Law had the good fortune to avoid the coroner’s inquest, some of his neighbours were not so fortunate ; deaths by accident were frequent, trees were blown down like laths, old men and women tottering with infirmity, were thrown

with violence upon the pavement, and the newspapers teemed with "Horrid accidents occasioned by the storm."

There was one man whose mind was more agitated than the elements; it was the repentant sinner, who for a moment was still considered the lawful owner of Raven Castle, and who, in the solitude of his retirement, dreaded lest each breeze should bear on its howl the call of some officer of justice, or the voice of his brother reproaching him with the abduction of Laura Mackenzie.

CHAPTER XII.

“IF Snarling had been alive now, he would have called this a gale hard enough to blow the devil’s horns off his head ; it makes as much row as the explosion ; and if it had come on a moment after the blow up, half those trees from the Isle of Pines, would have landed on the lizard point.”

“Curse the gale,” said another of the very reduced crew of the Spitfire, “I should care little for that if we could get rid of that cursed frigate, which we cannot shake off ; there she is, gaining on us, under her reefed courses, and close reefed top-sails ; she rises over the sea like a duck, whilst we, pressed down by our canvass, are more like divers than swimmers, and

then those cursed Mother Carey's chickens, which even in this breeze make a noise loud enough to be heard, seem to rejoice in the gale, and promise its continuance."

"They are wonderful birds to be sure," replied the other, "they seem to breathe better in a breeze, which if a man opened his mouth would blow half the teeth down his throat, and then they set on the water and tumble over the break of the sea as if it could only wash their eyes, and clean their beaks. What's the Captain about? I never knew him take a chase like this, so unconcernedly."

"Ever since the last affair at the Pines, he has taken every thing unconcernedly, and why we come poking our noses in English waters, when we might have picked up a few more hands from La Guyra, Havannah, or Vera Cruz, no one can tell."

"I think, Tom, our character was blown up on a little after that affair, and perhaps we are better out of those latitudes. When once those Admirals want to promote a favourite, or give a young nobleman a chance of being no-

ticed in one of their despatches, they would not mind letting half the stations be neglected to gain their point; then you know, they are looked upon as good men by the parents, and all the old weather beaten chaps who have toiled for years and years, until they have as much white hair on their heads as would twist up into a locket chain of a fathom and a half in length, see the beardless youngster clapped over their heads, and are told to be quiet, and contented, because he was the son of a lord; well, a pirate vessel, Bob, and such a one as us who make no bones of robbing a church, or of plundering a craft, would be just the thing for them. Lord love you, the boats would advance under three deafening cheers, the defence would be the most determined, and bloody, and the young gentleman, hardly big enough to rap at his father's door, without standing on sixpenn'orth of halfpence, would lead the boarders, throw the Captain overboard, and after running a score of us through the body, spitting us like so many larks for roasting, and performing prodigious feats of valour,

(those are the words Bob,) he hawls down the black flag with his own hands, and hoists the British ensign at the peak of the conquered pirate."

"My eye, Tom, what a secretary you would make for a commander in chief; I'm blessed if you would not make a hero out of that young Philadelphia lawyer, who stuck so fast in Snarling's throat, that he could scarcely say a word without blessing him; that's the way they work it, is it?"

"Aye, that's the way; the industrious are the road makers for the idle; the labourer tills the ground and drags out his existence at twelve shillings a week, until he is too old to work, and then he gets a retiring pension for life in a workhouse. I was brought up to that, but finding other people profited by my labour, I took to our trade, made war with all the world, and am an independent gentleman, ready to be hanged at a moment's warning."

"How the craft surges through this sea, and just look how nobly that frigate stems it, she is gaining upon us, but without something gives

way she'll never near us sufficiently, to keep sight of us these dark nights; we had better tell the Captain how we get on; I never knew him so drunk, or so drowsy before; he thinks nothing can touch the schooner, but the flying Hebe, and although they have altered the paint of that frigate, I'll swear she is the same which gave us such a tug before, and which has now got us in a more uncomfortable position than the last time we saw her."

"Take a peep, Bob, there's that Captain measuring a chart, instead of measuring the distance between us and the frigate; he seems more intent upon that, than some priests at their prayers."

To the seaman's remarks, that the frigate evidently gained upon them, the Captain paid no attention; but turning round, abruptly, desired some one to go aloft, and look out for the land, on the lee bow.

Half an hour afterwards, it was distinguished, it was the coast of Ireland; and the part first made out, was Achile head, on the western part of the island. The frigate was at

this time, on the schooner's weather quarter, at least six miles distant, fore-reaching a little, but very little; the wind was about N. N. W. blowing very fresh.

It had been the Captain's endeavours to reach the coast of Wales, by passing to the northward of Ireland, making his course between Fair head, and the Mull of Cantyre. The frigate when first seen, was on his weather quarter about a point, and trusting to the superiority of the Spitfire's sailing, he had continued his course under a press of sail, until the land was made broad on his lee bow. He now began to see the danger of his situation, and the more he pondered over the chart, the more he became sensible of the perils to be encountered; he could not attempt to tack, the wind and sea were too high for that manœuvre, and even if done, the frigate from her position would have cut him off, if he bore up, the frigate would have made an angle, and have enclosed him between the land and herself; if he continued, he might weather cape Urris, but if the wind headed him half a point,

he must be forced into Donegal bay ; and even if the wind remained true, it was a miracle, if he could round the Bloody Foreland. To windward was a fearful enemy, a ship of extraordinary fleetness ; one which in the annals of the navy of England, has never had an equal : and she under every advantage from her power and weight in a sea way ; to leeward was a danger to all seamen, the most appalling—a lee-shore, on which the long sea of the Atlantic broke with terrific force, whitening the coast with its spray, and offering but few very few inlets, to save the tempest tossed seaman, in his dangerous extremity.

The compasses in vain measured the distance upon the chart, it was evident the Spitfire could not pass more than four miles, a most insignificant distance to windward off cape Urris, and then the slightest variation would throw her into the bay of Donegal. The few books on board, relative to navigation, had reference principally to the coasts on which the Spitfire was accustomed to cruize, and the want of a man acquainted with the part on

which she now was, contributed to augment the apprehension of the Captain.

The seamen, with the indifference of men, ever accustomed to hair breadth escapes, continued their conversation, unmindful and without knowing the danger to be encountered ; on the weather quarter, they knew was sure death ; for a vessel which they had plundered the morning previous to the increase of the wind, had been boarded in their sight by the frigate, and the character of the Spitfire had been ascertained from those who had suffered by her lawless aggression. Although the stranger gained a little, that little was scarcely heeded ; the dark night would assist her escape, and the song and the glass would enliven the moments, and banish the idea of danger.

Far different was it with the Captain : every minute rendered his situation more painful, and every half hour rendered the danger more difficult to remedy. Once, whilst pondering over the charts, and observing the few chances of escape, he thought of bearing up for black Sod bay ; and running down between Achile

island, and the main, escaping by the small outlet to the southward, towards the isle of Clare; but he was not informed of the dangers of the coast, and it would be dark before he could enter the straight; and this his only chance of escape, was lost in the indetermination of his mind, to avail himself of it.

As the evening drew to a close, the land was observed gradually increasing to the northward, until the last head-land, which was cape Urris, was not more than three points, on the lee bow. The sun, over which the clouds had passed with fearful rapidity, was sinking red and fiery; dark clouds seemed gathering to windward, whilst over their heads, the scud flew fast around them, the sea broke furiously, and in the air sea gulls, and mother Carey's chickens swept upon their strong wings over the surface of the foaming water, or swam over the toppling sea.

Never, until this moment, had the Captain of the Spitfire been apprehensive of his fate; for those who escape detection grow bolder as their crimes increase, and familiarity with dan-

ger renders the mind superior to difficulties ; but here was no possibility of blinding himself to the fate which awaited him : to windward was the gallows, to leeward, the impervious horror of the leeward shore. The sun sank, and was lost in the ocean, and darkness and night approached ; (the long, long night of December, rendered longer from the apprehension, that it was the last his eyes might see,) soon drew its sable curtain over the world ; the wind grew more boisterous, and the sea broke more frequently over them, still did the Spitfire maintain her well deserved character, she rose cleverly to the sea, and in spite of the weight of her canvass, which pressed her much, she behaved, uncommonly well.

It was strange in this dreadful moment to hear the voice of the seamen singing, the hoarse wind making the base as it rattled through the rigging, and occasionally a burst of laughter, as if no danger was near, followed the merry song, whilst the Captain paced his deck, stopping for every sea, turning shorter, and shorter, each moment looking to leeward,

expecting to see the high bluff point of cape Urris, on his lee bow, then fixing his eye on the canvass, and trying, by a gentle luff, to see if the wind had varied more to the westward ; no, the wind to which the fickle mind is frequently assimilated, was that night as steady as unflinching bravery ; it never broke the schooner off a point, to give one moment's hope of escape, by wearing, or allowed her to look to windward of her former course, and thus bring the land broader on her lee beam ; the error had been committed. The schooner after dark, instead of wearing and running all risks of detection in gaining the open sea, had continued to the eastward, and perhaps in this error, some forgiveness might be demanded, since in this direction, was the one only object of the Captain's thoughts, one from whose love, he had never swerved, and one who would believe him dead, and mourn him within ten days of the night now in question. It is hard to turn a lover from the abode of his love, and discretion and prudence are lost when the heart is fixed upon one only object.

For a long time, the Captain wavered in his determination to apprise his crew of the utter hopelessness of their situation, for if he did, he knew that some, reckless of danger, despising all preparation for death, would resort to drunkenness, whilst others if such formed a part of his crew, which was doubtful, would, after a partial intoxication betake themselves to prayers, and in the emergency of the moment, lose the presence of mind so absolutely necessary for escape. "No," said he to himself, "as they live so must they die; of what avail would be the half drunken prayer for forgiveness, and mercy wafted on the wind accompanied by a deep curse for a companion; the death bed confession, and the last cry for mercy, are the results of fear, not of contrition; and better not to insult their Maker, by a vow, which if by his gracious hand, the danger was evaded, would be obviated by the oath so frequently recorded. No," he continued musing, "it is better they should die unreclaimed, than meet death with a lie quivering on their lips." He now turned his thoughts to her he loved; he

retired to his cabin, and there wrote two letters, couched in terms of the warmest affection, desiring her never to seek out his mode of life, and in one parting sentence, in which he wrote as it were his soul, he implored her to lift her angel voice to heaven in his behalf, and in the very jaws of death, he confirmed his former love. These letters he placed in bottles which he securely corked, and kept them in readiness to be thrown overboard, as the danger grew more imminent; once more he attempted to pray, but at that moment the remembrance of all his former wrongs, prompted some malice in his heart, and the recollection of his life alarmed him from his purpose; all was done that he could do, or would have done, save the record of his life, that was too long, and too painful, to be committed to paper at such a moment; for when he had finished a letter, in which he forgave his brother, and called upon him to be the friend and protector of Laura Mackenzie, as in impassioned language, he recorded the discovery of Rawlinson and his papers, and dwelt with mildness and

moderation, upon the accumulated injury he had suffered from his brother ; he called down a blessing instead of a curse upon the author of all his crimes, and implored Providence to prosper and protect him. His name was scarcely written, when the man on deck called with a loud voice, “ Land upon the lee bow ! ”

The Captain was instantly on deck ; there, too palpable for a doubt was the land of cape Urris, and as an occasional glimpse of moonlight gleamed through the clouds, the boiling surf was distinguished. It is said, when an earthquake is going to occur, that animals are sensible of the approaching danger ; that horses are unquiet, and refuse to lie down, and that dogs moan aloud, and become drowsy and inactive ; whether the voice of fate calling upon her victims, or the alarm these words, “ land to leeward,” in a gale of wind, ever conveys to a seaman’s mind, roused the sleeping wretches to look upon the danger with which they were surrounded, is unknown ; but every man was on deck—a general consternation ensued—and the panic was universal.

The danger, although imminent, was yet some hours distant, during which time, much acrimony of remark occurred; some accused the Captain of the violation of his oath, in having brought the vessel into that dilemma, which by prudence, might have been avoided; others who always were most active with advice, urged the necessity of attempting to tack, and in spite of the frigate, which was visible on the quarter, run by her, and trust to the heels of the Spitfire, although it was evident she had at last found her superior in the flying Høbe; the very idea of a chance, suggested to the crew the necessity of the attempt, and the Captain, who saw a certain capture on the one hand, and a certain wreck on the other, in vain upbraided his crew with the cowardice of their intention, and boldly called upon them to perish, rather than be hung before thousands of spectators, amidst the hooting and revilings of the mob.

“We *may* escape,” they said, “by this effort.”

“ And we may all be saved,” said the Captain coolly; “ although the schooner be lost, nay, we can insure a better chance, she will yet fetch the harbour of Killibegs, we can run in, and setting fire to the vessel, escape on shore, whilst the flames will draw attention in a contrary direction to ourselves.”

To this plan, which if they had found that narrow and dangerous entrance, might have been crowned with success, there was a louder opposition, and when one of the crew detected the Captain in throwing over the bottles, he called his shipmates around him, and boldly accused his commander of a violation of his oath, of which these preparations were an evidence.

“ I call upon you, by your oaths,” said the commander, “ to obey me to the last, as you have pledged yourselves to do !”

“ You have violated the oath, and you no longer command us ;—put down the helm, Bob, and round with her.”

In vain the Captain attempted to enforce his authority, fear and consternation rendered the

crew callous to his threats, and disobedient to his orders ; all talked at once, each man was clamorous to be heard, and the confusion and dismay, was above all control.

“ Down with the helm, Bob, she’ll stay ; although the sea’s as high as the clouds, and the wind is as loud as the noise of a long gun.”

“ Fool !” said the Captain, “ would you hasten the end you are endeavouring to avert, if she misses stays, she will drift upon cape Urris and then not a soul will be saved. Look at the surf as it boils upon the shore, and the foam which hisses and breaks upon the reef, whilst the spray almost covers its highest peak ; let her go past the cape, and then—”

“ Aye, then indeed,” interrupted a voice, “ we may talk if we can, we shall be land locked, and the devil himself with his tail for a tow rope, would never creep us to windward. Down with the helm, Bob, we can run by the frigate, who cares for a shot or two, and who can point a gun in a sea-way like this ?”

“ Stop one moment,” said the commander “ before you attempt this rashness ; ever since I have commanded you, have I not done my utmost to preserve the vessel, and the crew ? have I ever broken the oath, which bound me to you all ? No one answers, then you assent. Now I warn you, that the vessel, beautiful sea boat as she is, will never stay in this gale, and this head sea, you have no room to wear, and you will fall either a certain prize to the frigate, and be led to execution upon your arrival in England ; or you will force the vessel upon that reef, from which not one of us can possibly be saved ; if we forge ahead into Donegal bay, we may either, run into Killibegs, and trust to our legs for an escape, or we may wreck the vessel in some bay, more sheltered, than those rocks, to which at present we are so near.”

“ Down with the helm, Bob ; never mind his long yarn.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Captain's expostulations were all in vain; death, however ignominious, appeared more consonant with their wishes, than the dangers of the lee shore. The vessel was under her fore and aft fore-sail, and main-sail only, the wind was high, and the sea was more irregular than further seaward.

The helm was put down, and the obedient vessel flew up into the wind; but her way was suddenly lost, a heavy sea struck her on the chestree, the fore-sail flapped heavily in the squall, which at that unlucky moment rather strengthened the wind, and shaking furiously, ultimately split; another sea struck her on the weather bow, and the schooner refusing to stay broke off upon the larboard tack again. The

fore-sail was instantly hoisted, and to avoid drifting on the rocks, the Spitfire was kept a point away, and rounded cape Urris, about a couple of miles from the reef. The crew of that vessel were accustomed to activity in all emergencies, and now clear of the reef, they began to think the Captain's proposition the best ; they all declared they would follow his orders, and talked loudly of the oath, from which they had released him.

“ Never,” he said, “ will I command the schooner again ; you have violated all discipline, you have taken the command yourselves, and you may retain it ; now the frigate will soon come up with us, and she has a retreat to seaward, whenever she likes, or a harbour in Killibegs, under her lee ; but our trial is to come, and at least, I hope we may meet our end like men, and not go down to our destiny degraded by drunkenness. We have but a few minutes left us ; our oath is absolved, we are now at the termination of life, free, the chain which bound us, the shackle which secured us, has dropt from us, we are no longer pirates,

but repentant men. It is useless attempting an escape, by means of the harbour of Killibegs; under this sail we cannot fetch it, our journey of life is bounded by those rocks, and our longest distance is to Donegal bay."

"Don't stand jabbering there," said Bob, "about souls, heaven's, mercy and such; if we go, we do go, but I'm blessed if we do go, without an effort to escape. Up with the new fore and aft fore-sail, unbend the old one, cut adrift the spars on the booms, and give the boat a chance for a swim; if the gallant little Spitfire strikes, the frigate's shots, there they go to leeward half a mile, will never injure us, and she will be obliged to keep clear of us to save herself;—whilst there is life, there is hope. To work, to work."

A new courage seemed to be instilled by the words of Bob. The new foresail was soon set, and the schooner, disregarding the fire of the *Hœbe* now steering evidently for Killibegs, kept close to the wind, intending, as Bob said, coolly to look out, for the smoothest part, in which to strand her.

To windward, the gale promised to increase ; to leeward, the land became every minute more clearly distinguished ; the beautiful vessel still clung to the wind, in spite of its power, and rose over the broken sea in spite of its force ; but all was of no avail ; she was embayed, the high land of Cape Urris was on her weather quarter, and Cape Malin, and the Bloody Farland, were, although far distant, broad on the weather bow, whilst all to leeward was a coast defended by a reef of rocks, over which the sea broke with tremendous fury. Still with the appalling sight before their eyes, still with the expectation of instant death, without the remotest chance of escape, the crew of the pirate vessel indulged in occasional levity, and fearless of all consequences laughed at the danger, as one not a bit more serious than many others, they had escaped.

Far different was the thought of the Captain ; his life of crime could scarcely be atoned for, by an hour of sincere repentance, although that life had been the consequence of a good action ; but in the solitude of his cabin, whilst

the loud wind, and the noisy sea would have drowned his words, he offered up his prayers in sincerity, and he believed those prayers, were heard.

Awakened from his devotion by the sudden thought, that in this life, it behoves every man to use his utmost endeavours to preserve the blessing which God has bestowed upon us, and that in danger and in difficulty, we are left to our own resources, and called upon by our own feelings to put our shoulders to the wheel, he again assumed the command, prayer could scarcely be expected to still the wind, or cause its variation, and those, who on such an occasion, lost the moment which might have been seized, and turned to advantage, merit neither pity nor forgiveness ; we are not in this world, like the idle servant, to leave our talents unemployed, or believe that the uniformity of the great Creator's designs are to be changed, because a few despairing prayers are in the moment of danger, hastily offered.

“ It is my duty,” said the commander, “ to use my utmost endeavours, to save you, but if

I succeed, I declare myself no longer bound by any obligation to remain with you ; again, I offer myself in this almost hopeless situation, and if you are willing to obey me in danger, and in difficulty, I will do my utmost to that end."

"Why no one ever thought you would desert us," said Bob, "upon a pinch, like this ; of course, you have been overhauling the log book of your life, and added up your reckonings as to the course, and distance run, and the same to steer to the other place ; you know you've hove the log for the last time, and now as you think you'll never have to turn the glass again, you are come on deck to die like a man, and not slink below like a coward, in a carnage. Bless your heart, there's not a man fore and aft the Spitfire, who cares a straw about his life, as long as you stick to us."

"I will do my best, my lads, but I see no escape ; still, with coolness and attention, we may save some lives, although the vessel is split into planks not large enough to make—"

"Coffins for the crew, Sir," said Bob, with a

smile, "we don't want them, all our chaps sleep in hammocks, and they fit their backs better."

"How far can you see the land to leeward?" said the Captain.

"About a point before the beam, from that, right aft."

The Captain went below; on his table a chart had been previously opened, the corners of which were fastened down by small nails, a swinging lamp gave a feeble light, although quite strong enough to show the dangerous position of the schooner, an order was given to take the exact bearing of Cape Urris, and the distance was easily measured; over the Captain's head, was a compass, he anxiously inspected the position of the Spitfire, and ascertained that there was no possibility of reaching Killibegs, to which place the frigate had evidently steered, leaving the pirate to the fate, she had courted. The various openings on the coast to leeward were carefully examined, until hope itself grew sick, for in those days, the charts were not made with the

surprising accuracy of the present times, and the numerous crosses alone indicated the danger, to be apprehended, without pointing out, with sufficient accuracy to avoid them, the actual positions of each. There appeared one small spot on which no cross existed, and there alone could hope suggest the possibility of escape. Still the Spitfire plunged on in a desperate struggle against wind and wave, although she drifted fast to leeward, and now began to give more evident proof of her nearing the shore, from the irregular roll occasioned by the rebound of the sea from the rocks.

It was not until then, that the slightest remark, indicative of an absolute conviction of their danger, escaped from the crew, and then appeared the consummate coolness of those men who had faced death a hundred times, without ever fearing his approach.

“I say, Bob,” said one man, “now’s the time to clap on another suit of clothes, and get ready for a start.”

“Aye, and I advise you to put some money in your pockets, for who can tell, if it does not

pass in the other world, and is just as useful in buying a friend."

"I shall just take a parting glass to the health of the black-eyed girl, at Vera Cruz," said a mongrel Spaniard.

"There's nothing like a cigar to keep the cold water from chilling you," remarked a sturdy Portuguese, whilst another Englishman bringing upon deck, a piece of beef and biscuit, declared that no man could swim if his stomach was empty, and although all knew the danger, not a man talked of dying, excepting as a joke, not one offered up a prayer for forgiveness, it seemed to be a mark of their desperate lives, to meet death unappalled, as an Indian chief withstands the torture without an expression of pain.

The awful moment had now nearly arrived, and the clouds no longer hid the danger from sight; the moon—the same moon which showed to the Hebe the narrow and dangerous opening of the harbour of Killibegs, in her clear light, brought to view the boiling surf, which rolled over the vessels, close to leeward,

whilst it showed how far the reef extended from the main land.

There was no man cooler than the Captain; he had a night glass in his hand, and apparently unawed by the terrors which surrounded him, he swept the reef from east to west, in hopes of discovering the inlet which he had studied on the chart.

The crew began to watch their leader with more intense anxiety.

“A man to the lead,” said the Captain, “see both anchors clear,” he continued, after a moment’s pause.

“Seven fathoms;” said the man with the lead.

“Does the bottom feel hard?”

“It’s all rocks together, Sir.”

“Now, my lads, our chance depends upon ourselves, and our good luck; stand by to take in all the sails, and let go both anchors at once, we must veer away to the clinch. I fear the rocks will soon wear the cable away, then, if that occurs, we must run up the fore-sail, and run the schooner on shore, end on,

through that place, which does not seem to be quite so rocky as the generality of the coast." There was no time lost in availing themselves of this almost hopeless chance ; the sails were reduced, the anchors let go, the cables veered ; but as the Spitfire fell off, the cables flew through the hawse holes with the most fearful rapidity ; all attempts to check them, by means of stoppers or of choaking the hawse, was impossible, as no one could approach them. With anxious look each man now awaited the result, it was but a moment of hope ; the sudden jerk, as the cables ran out to the clinch, snapped them both, the foresail was instantly run up, and the schooner was now before the wind, running on the rocks ; each sea lifted her on its bosom, and then leaving her in a fearful valley between the one which ran hissing and foaming towards the rocks, and the succeeding one, which, breaking as it advanced, threatened to bury her in its tremendous mass.

Every man now came aft ; each one seemed careful to avail himself of the nearest place to

the taffrail, whilst Bob, who had strung up his nerves to meet the awful moment with coolness, stood at the helm, and steered the craft. Each sea rose higher and higher, and each one, as the schooner approached the shore, broke before it reached her ; then on it came howling and hissing with tremendous force, the foam roaring alongside, as the curling top not unfrequently threatened to poop and swamp the schooner.

At that awful moment, when the struggle for existence was so close, no hand was pointed, no voice implored the aid or protection, or no sigh for past crime was offered to heaven ; each seaman grasped the taffrail, or glued his eager hands to a cleat, whilst their eyes were fixed upon the boiling hell of waters, which seemed extended to receive them, and when the noise of the coming sea, breaking before it arrived, struck upon their ears, they crouched down, keeping their eyes upon the reef ; but there were two, who seemed of iron nerve, above all fear—one was the helmsman, who carefully watched the sea, and by his adroit

management of the helm, prevented the reeling vessel from broaching to ; the other was the Captain, who prepared to die, yet fearful of his death, coolly watched the tremendous breakers, and yet hoped ; for hope never dies, to pass the outer reef, and be thrown in comparatively smooth water ; not one hundred yards before them, roared the boiling surge, the vessel was carried onward, and dashed towards the rocks ; as the sea left her, the keel just touched, but not hard enough even to stop her way, although every man was sensible of the shock ; then came the last and most fearful sea, each man crouched down, the helmsman forsook his post, for the vessel threatened to be overwhelmed, the Captain clung to the main mast ; the hissing foam broke upon her as the tremendous surge roared by lifting her upon its bosom, and propelling her with the most fearful rapidity upon the reef ; she struck, one loud cry was heard above the noise of the angry elements—one scream, and in that scream, the first prayers which had fallen from the lips of the hardened scoffer, towered above

the wind, and “ the Lord save us !” was audible ; in that shriek was the only appeal for mercy, the slight vessel broke into separate planks, the large masts were hurled from their hold, the long gun sunk upon the reef, and not a soul was visible ; all were separated, some, for one second, made an ineffectual struggle against the whirlpool which sucked them down in its vortex ; others, dashed upon the sharp pointed rocks, had hardly strength to turn their bleeding sides before they choaked ; and others turned over in the sea, were instantaneously swallowed up ; the boat was carried over the reef and swam ; whilst the numerous spars, all of which had been previously cut adrift, were caught in the rocks, or hurled away beyond the breakers ; the foremast head caught against the reef, and the next sea turned the spar completely over, the mainmast, to which one person clung with all the energy of a dying man first landed on the reef, and on its upper surface, the only surviving man of the Spitfire, still breathed ; the following sea lifted it clear of the rocks, and it floated with its gasping

load in the smooth water near the boat, and there relieved from the continued break of the sea, it floated in security, affording a safe asylum to the man, who grasped it firmly, and gave him time to recover some portion of his strength.

Near the mast floated pieces of the wreck, planks which but a few minutes before, formed part of the most beautiful vessel which ever swam the seas; whilst the reef retained the mangled bodies of the pirates, with some of their ill-gotten wealth. An hour had scarcely elapsed ere the boat was tenanted, the oars which the prudent foresight of the Captain had caused to be secured underneath the thwarts, were soon released and in the clear moonlight, might have been seen one man diligently sculling the boat towards a sandy beach not far distant, and he the only survivor of the Spitfire !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE rough night was followed by a rough morning ; along the shore of Donegal Bay, was strewed the planks and portions of a wreck ; but not a vestige was seen of any of sufficient size to speak confidently as to her build or her rig. Each sea, as it rolled to the beach, turned over some corpse and threw the dead upon the shore, the mangled bodies, bloated, swollen, disfigured, of at least twenty men were found at daylight, whilst a boat lay on the beach.

The wild inhabitants of that part of the coast were soon on the alert ; there can be no harm in robbing the dead ; for of what use can their money be to them, and who is to trouble himself in endeavouring to find out the next of kin to a drowned man ?

That the vessel had come from foreign parts, was evident from the coin found in the pockets of the seamen ; but there was no trace of the name, save the very doubtful one of Dobbs, which was found on a part of the stern frame. The principal portion of the wreck was safely removed to the huts in the vicinity, and the earliest strangers, who arrived to dispute the slender remains on the beach, were the officers of the *Hœbe* who had been sent to survey the whole Bay of Donegal to Cape Urris, by their Captain; he being well aware that the schooner must have been wrecked. This party consisted of some seamen and marines, with the officers who had orders to seize any of the survivors, and to be more diligent in search for the men, than in saving portions of the wreck.

It was evident one or more had escaped, for the boat had been guided into a very narrow creek, to the head of which she could not have drifted, besides the painter of the boat was made fast to a small stump of a tree. A diligent search was immediately established, but there was no trace, with the exception of the

footstep of one man, who had evidently leapt from the bow of the boat and whose footmarks were deep in the sand. Beyond the beach all trace was lost, and in spite of the vigilance and activity of the officers, no tidings could be learnt concerning the fortunate man who had thus escaped uninjured the dangers of the wreck. The sea still roared over the reef, and all attempts to examine that grave in which the secret was buried, was impossible; the peasantry retired to their miserable huts, rejoicing at this unexpected windfall, and the detachment from the *Høbe* returned to their frigate, not having gained the slightest information, excepting as regarded the name of Dobbs.

It was ten at night, the gale had long since passed, and few remembered its force and its consequences but the underwriters of Lloyd's; there indeed the breeze and the gale leaves lasting impressions; for that which attacks the pocket, always assails the mind and the memory. The streets of London still thronged with the industrious and the weary, all seeking their homes, and amongst this busy tribe, the

tall figure of a man whose hasty stride betokened his extreme haste, pushed his way through the crowd, and regardless of all insults which were conveyed to his ears, passed rapidly on. It is said that when a man is anxious to advance rapidly in London, he should make up his mind to go leisurely, he will avoid by this means sudden contact, which occasionally leads to considerable altercation and delay, and will verify the old adage, of slowly but surely.

“ The time expires to-night,” said Laura to her old friend, “ it is Saturday and to-morrow is a day of rest.”

“ We will give him to-morrow for a chance,” said Mr. Law, “ it is a *Dies non*, and even the attorney may repose, the debtor on that day may breathe untouched the open air, and all save the felon walk under the protection of the Sabbath ; we will, I say, give him the chance of the next twenty-four hours.”

“ Hah !” said Laura, “ there is a rap at the door.”

“ I heard it, and therefore you need not

have announced it, you lose a great quantity of breath in useless remarks."

Laura looked at her strange friend, he would as soon have cut his throat, as have uttered one word which could annoy his charge; but it was habitual, he could not abide an useless remark.

"Each rap," continued Laura, "alarms me now, and in the alarm I feel a pleasure, which only expectation can experience, how slowly the servant moves at this unusual summons."

"Poor girl, poor girl," said Law, "yours is true love, it does not 'bend with the remover to remove.' Your ears are now more attentive than the faithful house dog's, your heart beats quickly even at a sound, as common as the Jew's cry of old clothes, and the poor servant whose day's work is over and who ought now to be in bed, is chided because he does not rush to welcome the very disturber of his repose."

"An old man, Sir," said the servant, "wishes to speak with you for a moment."

"Does he look like a Jew, or a sailor?" said

Laura. The man could not refrain from a smile, as two more opposite characters could not be well imagined.

“Has he a smooth face?” said Mr. Law, catching a certain disposition to be jocose; “or does he wear top-boots, for a Jew without a beard, or a sailor in top-boots, are two of the most unlikely occurrences in life.”

Mr. Law was informed, that in the opinion of his servant, the person was neither a Jew, nor a sailor, but a very respectable looking personage very anxious to see Mr. Law.

“Show him up,” said Mr. Law; “now my little dear, I dare say you think this some young man with an old face.” Anxiously indeed did Laura look for the entrance of the stranger, who hobbled up stairs but slowly; at last he made his appearance, it was Herbert. The cottage had been lent to the invalid midshipman’s uncle, and Herbert had obtained permission to come to London on his own business.

“And what’s your business, Herbert,” said Laura with much kindness, “do you want any

money, only say what you want, and if it is in my power you shall receive it ?”

“ I want,” said Herbert, who had grown very old and a little childish ; and who endeavoured to stop his tears as he spoke, “ I want to see my master, my dear young master, and then to die.”

“ You are not singular,” said Law, “ in one of your wishes, we all want to see your young master ; but as to the dying, we only die of love here ; go down to the kitchen, Tom, take care of Herbert, give him a good supper, a glass of warm wine, and a comfortable bed ; and no man will talk about dying after that ; poor fellow, age has sadly shaken him, and in his present situation, he is but little qualified, as an evidence of a fact, which occurred years ago.”

“ What fact, Mr. Law ?”

“ Ladies should never ask questions, when, in all probability, they will get no answer ;—there, don’t pout girl, let me see, don’t be angry, Laura, but I am going to ask you a favour, difficult to grant ; don’t speak to me for ten

minutes," here, this curious old gentleman covered his eyes with his hands, and in that state remained about seven minutes, when he sprang to the bell, and pulled it violently, "mind," he said to the servant, "mind, I see Herbert before he goes to bed ; now, girl, you may talk again."

The attention of Laura was too much fixed to heed his remarks ; her eyes seemed fixed, her attention rivetted, and her hands, which she had clasped together, gradually appeared to be forcing each other still closer. Law thought she had gone mad, he stood before her looking close upon her face ; but she took not the slightest notice of him.

"Thank God !" she suddenly exclaimed, "it is him ! he is here !"

"Him !" said old Law turning round,—
"here,—where ? why, child, you frighten me ; there is no one here, not a soul, but ourselves."

"There ! again, open that window, and my life upon it, your client, my promised husband, is within ten yards of your door."

Law caught her arm, as she rushed towards the window, believing her mad; but although excited almost to madness, she still had sufficient command over herself, not to frighten her friend. Listen, Sir," she said, "you will hear a tune, which no one ever whistled but Albert—now—there!"

Law inclined his ear on one side, and he certainly did hear some one whistling; but why Albert, if it was him, should stand out in the cold whistling, when he might have walked in and talked," puzzled the solicitor, "why does he not come in if it is him, child? Bless you, its some one who has heard the tune, and being very much embarrassed for company, is making a little musical society for himself."

"Perhaps he thinks it is too late, that we are all in bed, and he is unwilling to disturb us."

"Perhaps, Miss, he's a greater fool, than I took him for;—here you, Samuel, Thomas, Robert, what the devil's your name? go into the street, and ask that gentleman who is whistling, to walk up; tell him, we are not gone

to bed, and we shall be happy to see him ; we like his music, it certainly is very original."

Tom concluded his master was mad, and being one of those domestics who will think, thought it just as advisable to reconnoitre, before he introduced some desperate character into a room, in which sat only an old man, and a young woman. He cautiously opened the door, and surveyed, as well as he could, the vicinity of his master's house. He was not long in that situation, when he was accosted by a man—" Here, honest fellow," the stranger began, " do you think a piece of gold can unlock your lips ?"

" Very probably, Sir," replied the servant, " providing always, and nevertheless, as master says, the question is asked at a respectable distance."

" Who is your master ?"

" My master is the wonder of the parish, Sir, he is called the honest lawyer, and his name is Law ?"

" Well, like master like man, no doubt ; another answer, and then for the reward ; do

you know were one, Miss Laura Mackenzie lives ?”

“ I say, Sir, I beg your pardon, but are you the gemman, who was whistling the original air ?”

“ Yes, to be sure I was,” replied the stranger.

“ Then master’s compliments, and he begs you’ll walk up ; he is afraid you’ll catch the rheumatism, if you swallow so much cold air ?”

“ What are you talking about there ?” said Mr. Law, who being afraid his order was a little imprudent, came down to welcome the stranger, in the company of his servant.

“ My true, my valued friend,” said Albert as he threw off his cloak, “ behold me within a day of my time !”

“ Within three hours of your death,” said Law ; “ come up stairs.”

“ One question before I move ?”

“ It will be answered on the landing place above,” said the solicitor, “ or I mistake my woman.”

“ In this, however, Mr. Law was mistaken,

for no hand welcomed the stranger, no voice saluted his ear ; but on the sofa, in perfect insensibility reclined the beautiful figure of Laura Mackenzie. She was in that state removed up stairs, but not before love had stolen its own property—a kiss ; the old house-keeper was summoned and Laura was made over to her care and attention.

“ Welcome, Sir Albert de Lancy,” said Law, “ the whole mystery is unravelled, and he who now usurps your title, or rather retains it until you claim it, is anxious to make every reparation in his power, to leave the country, to live upon your pardon, and your generosity.”

“ We will speak of this on Monday, of affairs dearer to my heart, I would now talk ; is Laura the same constant, affectionate girl ?”

“ She has but one thought, one hope, your return ; day after day, has she began with that theme, and it was the last subject on her lips at night ; your visit, I hope, is longer than usual, for with all my best wishes, to enter into an explanation on your affairs, half an

hour, is the most time I have ever commanded, and half of that, in a jigging ball room."

"I am in no hurry now ; my time is my own, I am free at last ; another inquiry, and then for to-night I am satisfied—Herbert, my old servant, Herbert, does he live?"

"And eats I promise you. I should think, at this moment, the old man is at his supper, in the servant's hall, drinking your health in a glass of warm wine, nicely spiced. He is getting old, and to establish the case against your brother, is after all, a very doubtful evidence."

"Thank God, Mr. Law, we need no evidence, because it is not my intention to pursue him, or disturb him. I have had reason to understand that he is not only sincerely repentant for all the injustice used towards me, and that injustice has occasioned me a life—"

"Of excitement," said Law, remarking how suddenly he stopped ; "of energy, it has given you an opportunity of amassing a large fortune by your own honorable exertion, which has made the honest and industrious thrive under

your guidance, and protection, and there must be hundreds who bless your name. It is a vast consolation in old age, to look back on a bright retrospect of life, where no palpable injustice towards our fellow creatures, darkens the distant horizon, and where the gloom of the valley of death, is dissipated by the bright rays of a man's memory.'

Albert fixed his bright eyes upon the speaker, as if to read, if the words uttered, were a mockery, or a believed truth. But the honest man before him, spoke what he thought, believing that continued application to trade, had rendered his client a wealthy man.

"I have done with trade now," said Albert ; "henceforth, I shall lead a domestic life, and in its quiet, seek repose here." He placed his hand on his heart, then suddenly starting, he asked for the papers he had entrusted to the care of his solicitor.

"On Monday we can arrange all that matter."

"On Monday !" replied Albert, "it is an age ; I cannot wait that time, you have not

opened the packet, surely? I am here to my time."

"If that packet can afford you one moment's comfort, by being returned unopened, I will fetch it, myself. My word of honor, I hope, is sufficient to assure you, that no man has touched it." He went to his office, and in a few minutes, placed the packet in Albert's hand. Without considering the bad compliment paid to his friend, he scrutinized the seals minutely, and satisfied himself, that the parcel had never been opened; he then carefully placed them in the centre of the fire, and as he watched their total demolition, he muttered, "Thus perishes the last witness but one."

Mr. Law had never seen his client, but either in a hurry, or under great excitement, and this act was regarded by that wise man, as a very natural occurrence, for these were supposed documents, only available in case of death. The word "witness" puzzled him a little, but Law was never suspicious, he was an honest man, himself, and believed others to be the same.

“ I have but a few more words to say,” said Albert; “ before we part ; the whole secret of my brother’s conduct, must remain for ever a secret ; he must not be disturbed, either by word or deed, in his possessions ; he is a more worthy representative of our family, than myself ; we must endeavour to remove any prejudice against him, which might have been occasioned by that unfortunate abduction of Rawlinson.”

“ How came you to know of that ?” asked Law, in surprize ; “ for no one has communicated with you, since that event.”

The question startled Albert, and he told a falsehood to conceal the truth ; so true it is, that the least fault, the least deviation from rectitude of conduct, requires a volume of lies to conceal the fact, and the character thus supported, remains upon the precarious pedestal of accumulated falsehoods. “ I forget how I heard it, but I did hear it.”

“ There’s no doubt of that since you know it, the circumstance occasioned considerable noise in the county, and Mr. Molesworth

totally estranged himself from your brother, rather your house, in consequence.”

“ He was ever an honest man. Does he know the circumstance of the will ? ”

“ What will ? What circumstance ? Why, man, you are very absent to-night, and you look every moment like a false witness under cross examination.”

“ Good night, Mr. Law ; I am not fit to talk on these subjects ; now you will not fail to remember me most affectionately to Laura, and to-morrow, I will myself seek an opportunity of reviving in her heart, the sentiments she so often expressed towards myself.”

“ You must speak then, before you come into the room, or she will forestall your intentions, by throwing her arms round your neck, and confessing her love—good night.”

CHAPTER XV.

“IT is very strange,” said Law to himself, as he mused over the papers on the Monday, and compared them with a letter he held in his hand. “Here is a case worthy of the ingenuity of a lawyer to fathom, but the draught of these marriage settlements, must be done first; young people are always in a hurry to be married, and as often in a hurry to be released, afterwards; yet it is strange—firstly, we have the fact in this extraordinary confession of Rawlinson, sent to me this morning, which seems to have already been known to my client, then the fact, that the original will was taken from him by a pirate vessel, on the stern of which was marked Jonathan Dobbs. On Sa-

turday night I could have sworn, when that packet was placed on the fire so cautiously, that I saw, as the paper blazed, and the parchment more slowly consumed, "The last will and testament of Ronald de Lancy," as plain as the anxiety of him who caused its destruction; then comes the fact from the little powder monkey, that the vessel known as the West India pirate, had the same name on her stern, at the Isle of Pines. Now we have a vessel of this name wrecked in Donegal Bay, chased by the Hœbe; her stern frame, as they called it, having been washed on shore; one man certainly being saved, by this long rigmarole account of a boat and a painter; there ought to be nautical attorneys; and the sudden appearance of Albert de Lancy, just giving him due time with all expedition, to reach this house; now leave out the case of the will, the knowledge of the abduction, and the words, 'thus perishes the last witness but one,' and I confess, the case would fall to the ground; then again, how account for his riches, his sudden abandonment of his claim against his

brother, his diamonds, his appearance as a Jew, the return of Rawlinson's coat, the Spanish money given to the servants, at Raven Castle, whew! I had better go on with the marriage settlements, and yet the girl with the fortune should be protected. He gives no account of his trading here or there, and a deserter does not generally become a wealthy man, in a few years. There is a manly honesty in his countenance which defies suspicion, but no man who is guilty, can at all times command even his own heart's blood, which mounting in his face betrays him. I have it, I will unravel this mystery without alarming Laura, or her betrothed husband; yet it would be a pity to separate them, they sit for hours holding each others hands, repeating again and again, like the useless words which swell a legal document, their vows of love and affection—and there the day passes like a dream of happiness; her eyes too, are never one moment withdrawn from his, and so absorbed are they in visions of future delight, that I have passed through the room a dozen times, and

neither of them have remarked me. Strange infatuation, which the consummation of their wishes so often, nay, so certainly endangers. A man cannot be *in love* with his *wife*, nor his wife with him. That question has been settled, judgment passed, years ago, by those who best understood love, and who held a court of love in France ; that's authority as good as a decision in law, by Lord Mansfield. Wilking," he continued, calling his clerk ; "here are the sums to be entered on the marriage settlements, when the rough draught is finished, bring them here. I will write a letter."

Thus pondered Law over the strange case of his client, whilst, as he had murmured, the happy couple, quite estranged from the world, were again and again repeating their vows of constancy, their unalterable attachment, and hastening through life, by avoiding its miseries.

"Now you are mine, Albert," said Laura, as he pressed her hand warmly ; "now, the world is inclosed in this room, come, tell me of

your roving life, your voyages in distant countries, some adventures, which the sailor must encounter ?”

“When we are married, and the time begins to hang heavily with my Laura, then will I tell her of distant countries where gold is as common as the sand on the beach ; but now, I can only think of you, your constancy, your firmness in every action of your life, and when your lips confirm again and again, the love you bear me. I could sit for hours, and rejoice at your expressions : let us now only talk of our love, our near marriage, our future place of residence ; we have many a year to pass together, and the anecdotes of youth cheer the decline of life.”

“How often do you wish me to say, ‘I love you,’ when the day is fixed for the marriage, and all but the company invited—”

“Ah, there indeed is room for conversation. I am a man, Laura, who hates all public exhibition, of what should be essentially private ; I despise the gaudy parade, which makes even the postilion, who drives you from your house,

an advertisement to the public, that he conducts a new couple to their honey moon home. I would rather quietly walk into a church unmarried, and walk out again with my wife under my arm, unnoticed, unregarded, than stand the gaze of a score of loiterers, more attracted by the prospect of the breakfast, than allured by any sincerity of regard to those, who mutually surrender their liberty. I think cockades and cakes two abominations, which the world's wisdom will soon consign to oblivion."

"Your wish, dear Albert, is my law; the wedding shall be as quiet as you could desire. I only know two people, who I wish to be present—my uncle, and his son."

"And our mutual friend, and adviser, Law?"

"We cannot exclude old Herbert!"

"Not for the world, and I confess, hating as I do, the swell of company, that I would rather see Ronald and Margaret present. The altar of our union should unite all the family, and the house should no longer be divided against the house. Tell me, Laura, is your heart so

fond, that nothing could estrange it from mine, no report calculated to injure my character, startle you from your intentions, would you wed me through good or ill report, and braving the malice of enemies, dare to place your hand in mine?"

"Oh! if you knew how long the time has seemed, since last we met, how often, how very often, I have sat at the window watching each figure as it passed the house, hoping until hope grew faint with its own exhaustion, to see my Albert. If you knew how I have prayed for you when the wind increased, and the constant rain pattered against the glass, how every hour has been fraught with some remembrance of you, then you would no longer ask that cruel question, which involves a doubt of my love, my affection, and my constancy."

"Generous girl! How often have I heard men swear with equal fervour, and yet believe the slightest accusation, the lightest breath of scandal, and desert the almost unprotected girl."

"It is not so with our sex; we love ardently,

sincerely, and half the pleasure, half the reward of affection, is in the devotedness to the object. I would not hesitate this moment, if the ceremony had been performed, of leaving my country, and my relations, to share, either your glory, or your shame, and not one word should escape my lips, to censure, or condemn you."

"Remember these words, dear Laura; we cannot always appear the same as we do at present; there are changes in life, which often change our sentiments, our regards."

"I never would designate an attachment as love, if that love varied with every trifling circumstance. 'Love is not love which alters, when it alteration finds,' as Shakespeare says. I am not ashamed to own my love, I should only feel ashamed, if I were forced to renounce it; that cannot happen, we have known each other long, we have proved our constancy in years, the time approaches, when my future conduct shall convince you of the sincerity of affection. Why do you look so dull? so pale?"

“ Nothing, nothing, my dear, I wish only we were married, and in the retirement of the country, in the happiness of our mutual society, allow life to pass quietly, and unmolestedly away. On this day week, you are to be mine. Oh, that the day had passed ; for I look with distrust to it, fearing that some unforeseen circumstance may rob me of my heart’s dearest wish.”

“ Why, you are worse than a boarding school girl, calculating the hours before her holydays, and conjuring up a thousand improbabilities to make herself miserable. It has been my hope for years. I am not ashamed to confess the well placed attachment, I should only feel ashamed if I cease to merit your love.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE lingering delays of the law at last died of their exhaustion; the day previous to the one fixed for the marriage had arrived; the deeds were signed; the money of the settlement was paid to the trustees; and all the preliminary arrangements were completed; the uncle of Laura was introduced to his future nephew; but the young midshipman had suffered so much from the fatigue of travelling that he was unable to be presented to the happy couple, but he had sent a gallant message, that he would die in the church, rather than be absent from such a ceremony.

There was yet one awkward scene: it was the meeting between the two brothers. The rigid

countenance of Sir Ronald had not relaxed its severity; increasing years, and continued contrition had furrowed his face; his eye, once proud and daring, was no longer fixed upon the person with whom he conversed, but in every action every word, the influence of conscience, overcame his resolution, and he dared not look even his brother in the face; such is the result of crime! Had he but mastered the feeling of humiliation, in all probability his brother would have been as conscious-stricken as himself; but the latter being in the right on this occasion, was the bravest.

“ I crave your pardon,” said Sir Ronald to his brother, “ for the injustice I did you.”

“ Brother,” said Albert, “ I require no solicitation of pardon; we meet as friends, and let us not run the risk of a quarrel, by referring to acts and deeds better forgotten by both, better obliterated from memory; there is my hand, I ask no restitution of rights, no liquidation of debts. The title is yours, the castle is yours, I only ask, before I retire from this country, your friendship, your affection.”

“ I have meditated the same retirement beyond, if possible, the seclusion in which I have lately lived ; there is no charm in life, when suspicion dogs us, or when we apprehend suspicion—the hunted criminal dreads the sudden intrusion of the officer, and he who has an accomplice in guilt, walks within reach of the gallows. I would only retain the title for one reason ; it is difficult for a woman to lay aside the appellation which has sounded sweetly in her ears. Flattering her pride, might save me uneasiness ; her father !”—

“ Name him no more, Ronald, he will remain for ever where he is ; and it would save your wife much pain, by stopping all reference to her father, if you rumoured his death.”

“ It shall be done. I have already disposed of his house, by pulling it down. My child may yet restore the honour of our name, since you refuse to become its up-holder, by bearing the title.”

“ I have no wish for titles, those empty names, in which the frivolous rejoice ; I would rather make one for myself, than

inherit the proudest dukedom ; enough of this ; the title and the fortune rest with you, and if I have no children, my fortune will revert to your son. To-morrow, I am to be married ; from that moment, we shall never meet again ; nay, do not start, I have reasons sufficiently strong to induce me never to inhabit this country ; its forms, its customs, its regulations of society, its stiff, formal manner, are to me disgusting. I have seen much of the world, and I have learned, that happiness is not confined to any soil : each man must make his own ; the innocent have their's prepared for them. This then is our meeting, and to-morrow is our separation ; this hour has restored me to partial happiness since I have reconciled a brother ; hereafter, my name may be bruited abroad as one of the wonders of the world, as a man grown rich by industry ; and may no bleak wind of suspicion, rob me of its value ! Say not a word to Laura, as to my intentions of leaving England ; the woman, who marries a sailor, must share in his wandering disposition : we do not exact much from each other, only friendship, and that at a distance."

“ There is yet one question, Albert, I would ask, and unless it is answered, I cannot live in security or happiness ?”

“ Go on, brother, ask freely ; to restore you to permanent happiness, I would answer any question, however much I might wish it unanswered.”

“ It is of Rawlinson’s destination, and of certain papers ?”

“ I answer thus briefly, and let my words silence any future disposition, to refer to this subject ; he is in America, and every paper, every parchment—you forced the answer brother—or I should not have mentioned the document which flushed your cheek—is burnt ; there is not a record, not even one of the many notes which passed between you and your father-in-law, which can rise from the ashes of that grate, to scare you from Raven Castle.”

“ Oh what a weight of care, you have taken from my heart ; and yet how could you know of these papers, how—”

“ Brother, farewell ! to-morrow we meet at the church ; your question is answered ; rest con-

tented with the assurance of that fact. Laura is now with Margaret; I would see her with any one, rather than alone."

The once haughty Baronet, although assured of the evidences against him being destroyed, could not regain the cool look, the searching eye, for which he had once been so celebrated; still he felt himself more secure, and as he endeavoured to steel his mind against the inquisitive eyes of the beholders, he turned round, and saw the figure of the aged Herbert standing near the door; he startled back towards the window, and being quite unprepared for the intrusion, he ejaculated, "God of heaven! what power has brought you here?"

"I come to take leave of my old master's son," said Herbert; "these gray hairs could not descend in the grave, until my tongue had mentioned my heart's warmest wish—your forgiveness! I bear no enmity; my silence is sealed, my appearance now confirms what you may have heard from others, my having escaped a death."—

"Hush! hush, good Herbert!"

“ I forgive you, Sir, and may you live in peace !”

“ Stay, Herbert, this purse may purchase you some comforts in your age.”

“ If, in my poverty, Sir, I did not injure my old master’s son, my age will not require a bribe to keep a secret. Good bye, Sir, good bye !”

The old man bowed lowly ; the abashed criminal returned the purse to his pocket ; and he turned away from the door ashamed at the rebuke which his insulting offer had drawn from an old servant.

Far different had been the course pursued by Margaret ; she had assumed a perfect freedom of manner, as if she had no cause for repentance ; and Laura as innocent as her friend was guilty, soon forgot all her lurking suspicion, and with the generosity of a girl, she censured herself for having ever suspected such a friend as Margaret, of any sinister intentions. Margaret’s object was to glean from Laura some account of Albert, and in short, to obtain from her all the intelligence in her possession ; but

in vain her ingenuity was expended ; Laura had nothing to tell ; she only knew her future husband was Albert de Lancy ; how he acquired his wealth she was ignorant, and although the questions were put with all the ingenuity, of a clever and deceitful woman, no satisfactory answer, was elicited. She then endeavoured to alarm Laura, hinting, that the wealth was fictitious ; but this likewise failed, for a large sum had already been placed in the hands of trustees ; the last subject, was the one touched with the most exquisite delicacy, the discovery of the fraud practiced upon Albert ; Laura's innocent reply, to some allusion to Raven Castle, awoke all the suspicions in Margaret's bosom. " Mr. Law," she said, " calls me Lady de Lancy, and has promised me for to morrow's present, the property of Raven Castle !"

There was no longer any deceit in Margaret's manner, the very rage in which she resented the implication, alarmed her companion, who, in her turn, soothed the anger of her pretended friend, by declaring her belief, that Mr. Law

had said it as a jest ; but the words struck deep upon her mind ; she already thought herself, like the bird in the fable, despoiled of the feathers which belonged to a prouder bird, herself the miserable crow, without the peacock's plumage. Guilt is ever suspicious ; Margaret in an instant thought of a thousand plans to avoid the exposure she anticipated, and in the agony of thought, became absent in mind ; questions were asked, which she neither heard, or answered, and to some remark relative to Herbert, she startled for a moment, then passing her hand over her forehead, murmured, " I am very, very ill !" suddenly left the room. Her husband was apprized of it, and he instantly ran to her assistance. " Stand back," said the haughty hypocrite, " you have no right here. I married Sir Ronald de Lancy, not an adventurer. The title I will keep to my death. Though I wander through the world, I will not descend to be called like a shop-keeper's wife, and hear the girl who was my bridesmaid, usurp not only my name, but my residence."

" Margaret," said Sir Ronald, in his usual

slow manner, "your pride has ever been my unhappiness. I am the cause of your displeasure, but remember my crime does not excuse your fault; you swore to be my wife in sickness or in health, in weal or in woe; now show yourself not unworthy of your sex, and in being restored to your title, and to Raven Castle, learn to respect my brother, who refuses what is his, and who leaves to us and to our child, the inheritance of which he has been robbed."

"Been robbed!" said the haughty woman, "he was unfit for the office, so he resigned it. I tell you, Sir Ronald, he must be ignorant of the facts; he has made a virtue of ceding a right which he could not have maintained, and he has, with the same cleverness, that he has turned the ungrateful world to account, made even you grateful for a gift, he never believed was his to offer."

"Be silent, woman, and learn to respect one who respects his name too much to cast the slightest slander upon it; he does not claim the title, although by some extraordinary occur-

rence, your father's papers have fallen into his hands ; he is aware of every fact, so be modest and reserved, where haughtiness and boldness might be our ruin."

" 'Then, I have no occasion for Blackburn's assistance, he is not far from this door. Go, Sir Ronald, send him back to the country. I am quite recovered now, in a minute I will see Albert ; but go dispatch that man, or he might mar the marriage.'"

Blackburn had not escaped the vigilance of two persons, who accidentally passing the square, recognized him loitering in a suspicious manner—the rector of the village of Raven, and his son ; the surly dark countenance of the wretch might have attracted less inquisitive people than the rector, nor were they less astonished when they recognized Sir Ronald de Lancy, who, after whispering to his tenant, gave him money, and instantly returned.

The evening before the marriage, all who were to assist at the ceremony, but the young midshipman, were present ; there was that forced gaiety which betrays itself, and which

occasions the ghost of laughter, rather than its reality. In Mr. Law's face, there was an evident thoughtfulness, and his abstraction of mind was more remarkable, as he never found fault with the length of a remark, or the waste of a word; his eye seemed to wander from Albert to Laura, and from Laura to Albert, but he never betrayed his thoughts, although from broken expressions, such as, "strange coincidents—tally exactly—impossible—charming girl—fine looking man—we shall see, &c., altered his face entirely!"

This last remark was occasioned by the altered appearance in Albert. When he arrived in London, he wore mustachios, and a large forest of whiskers, as if cultivated to plant out his features; he was much sunburnt, and his face, from the profusion of hair, looked round and plump; the day before the present, he had cut down the forest, and shaved off the mustachios; his face now looked thin and peaked, the cheek bones looked higher and more prominent, the eyes appeared larger and lighter, and few who saw him, for the first time a fortnight before, could have recognized him

again ; it was his principal occupation, instead of looking at his bride, to watch every one else of the company, and Law remarked, that when any one seemed remarking him, he grew uneasy, and flushed.

“ One bumper to the bride,” said Law, as he seemed to have overcome all reluctance ; “ one bumper to her before we part ; to-morrow at nine o’clock, we meet here ; your son, Sir,” he continued, addressing Laura’s uncle, “ will, I hope, be present, he must be welcome, and may be useful. Laura Mackenzie, to your health, may you never regret the alliance, or I never blush for my client.”

The toast was drank, and more than one remarked the sudden alteration in Albert’s countenance, but it soon cleared up again. After one, or two dismal attempts at hilarity, the party separated, and if any prophecy of the future could have been drawn from that evening’s heaviness, it would have been a bold pair who ventured on the morrow’s marriage.

“ You are resolved, Laura, on this match ?” said Law, when the company had withdrawn.
“ Why ask me such a question ? You fed

my brightest hopes, you nursed the growing love, and now you ask me, if I am resolved? As surely as there is a power above us, nothing shall make me waver; he is my heart's only object. I would sooner rot in a goal with him, than live in Raven Castle with another."

The morning came, the bride was dressed, the breakfast seemed untouched, for on these occasions the eye is more regaled, than the palate. The carriages were prepared; the bridegroom was already in the church; near the altar sat a pale youngster, with an eye restless, and inquisitive. It was fixed upon the bridegroom, and at each turn as the anxious partner of Laura's future life paced the church in all the anxiety of the event, the youngster endeavoured to stand up more closely to observe him; his colour came and then forsook his face; the clerk brought him, unasked, some water, which he refused; and when he beckoned him away, his eye was fixed upon Albert de Lancy. At last the party arrived, and his cousin, even at that moment, approached to be made acquainted with him; his excessive agitation

alarmed her, and Law who supported her, asked the cause.

“Oh, Sir,” said the youngster, “if I could but delay this marriage for a week, I should be so happy!”

Laura started back, and asked, “For what reason?”

“I cannot swear to the man now, but by that time, I could have proof.”

“Of what?” said Laura.

“He is—”

“Who?” said Laura.

“The pirate of the West Indies, the Captain of the Spitfire!”

There was a moment's hesitation, when Laura, drawing herself proudly up, walked to the altar, and giving her hand to her future husband, in ten minutes' time left the church, his companion, his wife!

THE END.

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